



Dear Colleagues,

In 2015, Governor Jerry Brown signed a law that prohibited municipalities from banning artificial turf. At that time, very little was widely known about the health and safety risks associated with artificial turf, and it was thought to be an effective solution for severe drought.

Unfortunately, the panacea of artificial turf has not brought about water savings, and instead has created many unintended consequences. We now recognize that artificial turf is manufactured with petrochemicals, and the manufacturing process uses harmful per- and polyfluoroalkyl (PFAS) substances and other hazardous chemicals. PFAS “forever chemicals” are associated with cancer and linked to growth, learning, and behavioral problems in infants and children; fertility and pregnancy problems; thyroid disease; asthma; and more. Children and athletes who play on artificial turf are at increased risk, and because PFAS chemicals bioaccumulate, it is especially harmful to children who are still developing.

Toxic runoff from artificial turf contaminates drinking water, rivers, lakes, and oceans with microplastics as well as PFAS. The EPA has recently reported that there is no safe amount of PFOA or PFOS (types of PFAS) in drinking water, and both have consistently been found in artificial turf. Recent studies have found that 12 to 15% of microplastics in rivers, lakes, and oceans are from artificial turf.

Artificial turf must also be regularly cleaned of contaminants. Cooling and cleaning of artificial turf can require more water than would be used for the maintenance of natural, drought-tolerant grasses.

Artificial turf has been shown to reach temperatures much higher than natural grass, readily reaching 160 to 180 degrees F or more, creating heat-island effects, and causing heat-related injuries and illnesses such as skin burns and heat stress. This is particularly hazardous for disadvantaged communities where there are already too few natural green spaces. Additionally, artificial turf leads to increased sports injuries.

Artificial turf is an impervious surface that contributes to flooding when rain water is not absorbed for groundwater recharge. It kills the biome below and takes away critical food and habitat from insects, birds, and local wildlife, contributing to species loss. This is the opposite of what we should be doing during a biodiversity crisis when we have lost 95% of our local pollinators and our fire season has moved from three months of the year to a year-round phenomenon. We can no longer think of our urban green spaces as a separate element from nature. Ornamental artificial turf should be replaced with native plant species that are the most cost-effective measure to battle the urban heat-island effect while supporting butterflies, local songbirds, and other wildlife. Artificial turf playing fields should be upgraded to drought-tolerant turf grasses that are safer for athletes while supporting soil health and flood-risk mitigation.

Finally, because it is made of mixed plastic materials, artificial turf will never be economically viable for recycling. At the end of its 8-to-15-year lifecycle it is sent to a landfill, illegally dumped, or sent out of state to be incinerated.

Artificial turf is a danger to the health and safety of our community and our environment, and it fails to produce promised water savings. Therefore, we, the undersigned, support a ban on new and replacement installations of artificial turf in both public and private applications.

For further information visit:

https://www.ncsa.la/artificial_turf

Respectfully,

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