

Draft

NCSA opposes the installation of artificial turf in Los Angeles. NCSA is calling for a moratorium on all new installations due to human health hazards, environmental contamination, and negative impacts on wildlife. We support natural grass fields and planting of native California plants.

Some concerns about artificial turf include:

It's Too Toxic and Not a Safe Playing Surface— Artificial turf is a petrochemical product that contains hazardous chemicals including per and polyfluoroalkyl chemicals (PFAS) “forever” substances. PFAS and microplastics contain known carcinogens, neurotoxins, and hormone disruptors that can cause asthma, attention deficit disorders, low birth rate, early puberty, and are associated with a long list of cancers. PFAS microplastic exposure can occur through inhalation, ingestion, skin contact and mucous membrane exposure. Children and athletes are also at risk from the microplastic dust that is kicked up on artificial turf fields. PFAS chemicals bioaccumulate, and are therefore especially harmful to children who are still developing and may be exposed from an early age.

(heat and drought) Artificial turf is too hot, too hard, & may come with liability Issues - Artificial turf can reach temperatures up to 80° higher than the air temperature, readily reaching 160°F and more. This can lead to serious burns and heat stress. Turf burns and abrasion related injuries are also common. It has also been found to cause a “heat island effect,” raising the surrounding temperature in the local environment. Artificial turf actually uses an inordinate amount of water for cooling before use on hot days. With time, it can also become extremely hard, resulting in increased sports injuries and risk of concussion. Plastic grass is more expensive than planting and maintaining natural plants and grasses; it needs regular cleaning, maintenance, watering, and the infill replaced.

Pollutes local water, oceans, soil and air - Unlike soil and natural grass, artificial turf is an impervious surface (per State of Calif. and US EPA) negatively affecting the recharging of groundwater and increasing the risk of flooding. Stormwater run-off from artificial turf can cause PFAS to leach into groundwater, contaminating drinking water. The EPA recently reported there is no “safe” amount of PFAS in drinking water. Artificial turf sheds microplastics that pollute the soil and waterways where they can end up in our oceans, never breaking down. Artificial turf is not recyclable because of the many chemicals mixed together between the blades, and some infills. Therefore, it will end up in our landfills where it will continue polluting the environment. Artificial turf also off-gasses methane and ethylene (contributing to the climate crisis) whereas real grass and plants sequester carbon and produce oxygen.

Negatively Impacts Biodiversity - California is one of the world's 36 biodiversity hotspots with more native plant species than any other state in the U.S. Not only does artificial turf not support life, it actually kills the soil and the living organisms in it for generations to come. Artificial turf takes away habitat from insects, birds, and local wildlife, contributing to the loss of biodiversity. Safer Alternatives are drought tolerant grasses and California native plants.

Summary - Artificial turf is NOT a safer playing surface, does not significantly reduce water usage, and is not a sound investment. Installing artificial turf does not take into account the true cost to our health and the health of our environment. The answer is nature-based solutions – California native plants and drought-tolerant grasses that use less water, thrive in our climate, recharge our groundwater and provide food and habitat for local wildlife.

Some references:

Sen. Ben Allen SB 676 - “Emerging research is making it clear that artificial turf poses an environmental threat due to its lack of recyclability and presence of toxins such as lead and PFAS,” said state Sen. Ben Allen, the Redondo Beach Democrat who authored the bill. With the new law “local governments will again be able to regulate artificial turf in a way to both protect our environment in the face of drought and climate change but also by preventing further contribution to our recycling challenges and toxic runoff.” --CalMatters, Once it was hailed as a drought fix—but now California’s moving to restrict synthetic turf over health concerns, 10/18/23, by Shreya Agrawal <https://calmatters.org/environment/2023/10/california-synthetic-turf-pfas/>

Safe Healthy Playing Fields, Inc., <https://www.safehealthyplayingfields.org/>

Public Employees for Environmental Responsibility, <https://peer.org/?s=artificial+turf>

Public Employees for Environmental Responsibility, Los Angeles’ Artificial Turf Plan Misguided, 10/18/22, <https://peer.org/los-angeles-artificial-turf-plan-misguided/>

Nantucket School Commission 2/8/22 public workshop and expert panel discussion on PFAS risks from synthetic turf, recording <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=74ALKRBy7uw>

National Center for Health Research, 4/18/22, <https://www.center4research.org/nchr-letter-to-members-of-the-board-of-the-los-gatos-union-school-district-on-artificial-turf-and-p-laygrounds/>

Associated Press, EPA to limit toxic “forever chemicals” in drinking water, by Michael Phillis <https://apnews.com/article/epa-pfas-forever-chemicals-water-contamination-regulations-560d0ce3321e7fa8ed052f792c24f16f>

Associated Press, Toxic “forever chemicals” about to get their first US limits, by Michael Phillis, <https://apnews.com/article/pfas-epa-water-regulations-d2d5052c36a5a95f4e56866f028c9c4f>

CHE Collaborative for Health and Environment, 1/27/22, Webinar summary — Environmental Health Impacts of Synthetic Turf and Safer Alternatives, panel Rachel Massey, ScD, and Lindsey Pollard, Toxics Use Reduction Institute (TURI); Dr. Zhenyu Tian, Northeastern University; Sarah Evans, PhD, Ichan School of Medicine Mount Sinai, https://www.healthandenvironment.org/assets/images/webinarimages/Artificial%20Turf%20Q&A_FINAL.pdf

Resources for Alternatives:

LADWP Turf Replacement Program—Get up to \$25,000 rebate when you replace your grass with California Friendly and native plants. Rebates also available for Residential, Multi-family, and Parkway Landscaping. Free Online resources, free classes and free materials. Visit LADWP’s Turf Replacement Program at www.ladwp.com/save.

Note: Changes to the turf rebate program include:

- No longer providing rebates for the installation of synthetic turf;
 - Increasing California Friendly plant coverage required from 40% to 50%;
 - Limiting the amount of rock, gravel, or decomposed granite to 25% of the total project;
 - Incorporating rainfall capture techniques in project designs;
 - No longer permitting the use of synthetic or chemically treated mulch;
 - And recommending the use of biodegradable (natural/organic) weed barriers (instead of synthetic weed barriers).
- The program changes will assist LADWP customers in better capturing, conserving, and reusing water to prevent runoff on their property and reduce water demand. In addition to these water-saving benefits, by requiring program participants to minimize the use of materials such as gravel, pavers, decomposed granite, and synthetic turf – materials that often create a “heat island” effect on properties by absorbing the sun’s heat – LADWP aims to lower surface and temperatures on properties. This added benefit may assist customers in limiting energy use by reducing the need for air conditioning.

California Native Plant Society <https://www.cnps.org/> and Los Angeles Chapter <https://chapters.cnps.org/lasmm/>

Theodore Payne Foundation <https://theodorepayne.org/>

Santa Monica Mountains Fund <https://www.samofund.org/>