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L A D E R A R A N C H

Organic Land Management Plan

Policy and Operations Guide for Organic and Least-Toxic Landscape Care on LARMAC-Managed Property

Prepared for LARMAC Board and Committee Review

Revised Draft · August 2026 · Version 1

Core standard: prevention first · organic-compatible materials only · transparent exceptions · public notice

Prepared by resident volunteers of Ladera Health Watch also serving on the Ladera Ranch Landscape Advisory Committee.
Distributed with the accompanying Board presentation.

A Note to the LARMAC Board and Ladera Ranch Community

Over the past month, resident members of the Landscape Advisory Committee have been working to develop a proposed **Organic Land Management Plan for Ladera Ranch**.

Our goal was to put forward a serious framework for what a long-term transition away from routine synthetic pesticide use could look like in a community as large and complex as Ladera, not simply a list of products to eliminate.

In developing this draft, we reviewed existing organic land-care standards and policies and sought perspective from people with experience in organic land care, Integrated Pest Management, landscape and turf management, pesticide reduction and community transitions. Those conversations have included **Rika Gopinath of Beyond Pesticides; Diana Carpinone of Non Toxic Communities; Vanessa Armstrong, an organic landscape specialist who has worked with Osborne Organics; Jeff Beardsley, a landscape and water-management professional; Dr. Eric Gordon Middleton, Area IPM Advisor with UC Cooperative Extension; Kathleen Hallal, a longtime organic land-care advocate; and Todd Salemi, former owner of Organics Alive**, among others.

The nature and extent of those conversations varied. Some individuals provided specific advice or resources; others discussed particular issues, approaches or lessons from their experience. **Their inclusion here should not be interpreted to mean that every person listed reviewed, co-authored or endorses every provision of this draft.**

This proposal is also **not a final LARMAC policy**. It is the resident committee members' proposed starting point for discussion and review.

The draft establishes a clear long-term objective: eliminate synthetic pesticides and synthetic fertilizers from **routine** LARMAC landscape management, while maintaining a narrow, transparent process for genuine emergencies or site-specific rescue treatments when organic and nonchemical approaches cannot reasonably address a documented problem. That is consistent with the structure of the plan itself.

Our next step is to work with LARMAC through the proposal **section by section and line by line**, identify legitimate operational, safety, legal and financial concerns, and refine the language where necessary so that the Board ultimately has a policy it can confidently adopt and LARMAC can successfully implement.

We recognize that a durable transition cannot be accomplished simply by stopping products without building the systems that replace them. The proposed plan therefore addresses soil health, irrigation, monitoring, landscape design, contractor practices, nonchemical weed and pest management, product standards, public notification, recordkeeping and long-term accountability. The plan itself expressly recognizes that successful transitions require those replacement systems to be built so the community does not simply revert to old practices when difficulties arise.

Our objective is not a temporary pause. It is a lasting change in how Ladera's landscapes are managed.

We are sharing this draft with the community because residents should be able to see what we are proposing, understand the principles behind it, and follow the process as it moves through Committee and Board review.

— Resident volunteers of Ladera Health Watch also serving on the Ladera Ranch Landscape Advisory Committee

What the Proposed Organic Land Management Plan Would Accomplish

The proposed plan would move Ladera away from a conventional pesticide-dependent maintenance model and establish a whole-system organic land-management program based on prevention, soil health, monitoring and transparency. The plan expressly makes **no claim that pesticides or any other exposure caused cancers reported in Ladera**; its basis is prevention, stewardship and reducing unnecessary exposure.

It would:

- **End routine reliance on synthetic pesticides and synthetic fertilizers.** Nonchemical and cultural methods become the first response; approved organic-compatible materials may be used when intervention is warranted; synthetic products are reserved for narrowly defined rescue treatments or genuine emergencies.
- **Replace calendar spraying with monitoring and action thresholds.** Treatment would occur because a documented condition actually requires intervention—not simply because a product is scheduled to be applied. Recurring problems would trigger review of soil, irrigation, drainage, plant selection and maintenance practices.
- **Give the greatest protection to places where people and pets have the most contact,** including parks, playgrounds, sports fields, dog parks, paseos, sidewalks, school areas and pedestrian routes, with additional protections around waterways and drainage areas.
- **Create a public Allowed Products List.** Residents would be able to see exactly which products may be routinely used, for what purpose and under what restrictions. A product not on the approved list could not simply be substituted by a contractor.
- **Require meaningful advance notice and public records.** The draft calls for advance physical posting, electronic notification for high-contact areas and treatments near homes, a public dashboard of pending and completed applications, detailed application records and an annual report.
- **Make synthetic “exceptions” genuinely exceptional.** A rescue treatment would require documented need, review of alternatives, the least-hazardous effective option, the smallest practical treatment area and a corrective plan designed to prevent the same problem from becoming recurring chemical maintenance. Non-emergency exemptions would require Board approval and would be public, site-specific and time-limited.
- **Build the systems necessary for the transition to succeed.** The draft calls for soil and irrigation baselines, site inventories, contractor training, nonchemical weed-control capacity, turf renovation, landscape redesign where appropriate, non-toxic rodent management and eventual incorporation of the standards into LARMAC's contracts and bids.
- **Make the change durable and measurable.** An independent organic land-care consultant would assist with implementation, while public reporting would track pesticide use, exemptions, costs, acreage managed without pesticides and progress on soil, turf and irrigation improvements.

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PLAN OBJECTIVE Eliminate synthetic pesticide and synthetic fertilizer use from routine LARMAC landscape management, allowing only transparent, time-limited rescue treatments or genuine emergencies under Section 7, while maintaining safe, functional, resilient public spaces through soil health, monitoring, and cultural practices.

1. Purpose and Guiding Principles

The purpose of this Plan is to establish a durable organic land management program for all property owned, leased, or managed by the Ladera Ranch Maintenance Corporation (LARMAC). Landscapes are managed first through soil health, design, monitoring, and cultural practices. Where treatment is needed, only defined categories of organic-compatible, least-toxic materials are eligible for routine use. Routine synthetic pesticide and synthetic fertilizer use is prohibited, and every material application is disclosed to residents in advance.

This Plan is not an “organic-first” product-selection program and is not a conventional Integrated Pest Management program. It is a whole-system land-management framework centered on prevention, soil biology, appropriate vegetation, irrigation, landscape design, cultural practices, monitoring, and long-term reduction of the conditions that create pest and weed pressure. Organic-compatible materials are tools within that system when intervention is necessary, not the foundation of the program.

This Plan is intended for adoption by the LARMAC Board, implementation by staff and contractors, and ongoing technical support from a qualified organic land care consultant. Non-organic treatments are limited to the narrow, documented rescue-treatment and emergency process in Section 7.

1.1 Guiding Principles

- **Feed the soil, not the plant.** Healthy soil biology, appropriate irrigation, mulch, compost, correct mowing, and plant selection are the primary tools for preventing weeds, pests, and plant stress.
- **Precaution.** Where credible uncertainty exists about a material's effects on children, pets, wildlife, pollinators, or water, the uncertainty is resolved in favor of the less hazardous option.
- Prevention before intervention; non-chemical before chemical; organic-compatible before non-organic rescue treatment.
- **Transparency by default.** Residents should be able to determine what is being applied, where, when, why, and by whom without having to request the information after the fact.
- **Aesthetics recalibrated honestly.** An organic landscape is defined by soil and plant health, safety, usability, and ecological function—not by the total absence of every weed.
- **Neutrality on causation.** This Plan is a land-care standard. It makes no claim about the cause of any illness in the community; its basis is prevention, transparency, stewardship, and sound landscape management.
- **Exposure and contact matter.** Treatment decisions, permissible methods, monitoring frequency, and notification requirements shall account for the frequency and nature of resident, child, worker, and pet contact with a site. Parks, playgrounds, school areas, sports fields, dog parks, paseos, pedestrian trails, sidewalks, parkways, sidewalk-adjacent landscaping, and other frequently used pedestrian areas shall be treated as high-contact areas and receive the most protective practicable management standard.
- **Fire safety is integrated into landscape planning.** Plant selection, landscape design, vegetation spacing, pruning, groundcover, mulch practices, and fuel management shall comply with applicable and current Orange County Fire Authority vegetation-management and wildfire-prevention requirements. Fire-safety needs shall be incorporated into long-term landscape planning and plant selection rather than addressed only after a compliance problem develops.

1.2 Program Goals

Short-term goals. Maintain safe, functional, attractive, and fire-resilient community landscapes while protecting human health, pets, wildlife, pollinators, beneficial organisms, soil biology, and water resources; reducing reliance on pesticide and synthetic fertilizer inputs; correcting irrigation, soil, drainage, vegetation, and maintenance conditions that contribute to recurring pest and weed pressure; and establishing the monitoring, staffing, training, cultural-practice, procurement, and reporting systems necessary to support organic land management.

Long-term goals. Transition LARMAC-managed landscapes toward biologically healthy, resilient systems that require progressively fewer pest-control interventions through improved soil health, appropriate irrigation, landscape modification, climate-appropriate and native vegetation, groundcover, habitat support, and other preventive cultural practices. Landscape management shall balance human safety, ecological health, community aesthetics, usability, water conservation, and applicable fire-prevention requirements.

The long-term objective is not merely to substitute organic products for synthetic products, but to reduce the conditions that create recurring pest, weed, irrigation, and maintenance problems.

2. Scope and Applicability

This Plan applies to all landscape and pest-management activities on LARMAC-owned, leased, or managed property, including parks, playgrounds, sports and school fields, paseos and trails, slopes, medians and streetscapes, tree wells, planter beds, fence lines, curb edges and sidewalks, fuel-modification zones, the Sienna Botanica riverine system and detention basins, the Cambridge Citrus Grove, Wagsdale Dog Park, and community facilities.

The Plan binds LARMAC staff and every contractor, subcontractor, and vendor performing landscape, tree, aquatic, vegetation, or pest-management work on LARMAC property. Its requirements shall be incorporated into applicable contracts, bid specifications, requests for proposals, scopes of work, and work orders.

Structural pest control inside buildings and legally mandated vector-control activities performed by a public agency are outside the operational scope of this Plan. When such activities occur on LARMAC property, LARMAC shall provide notice and retain records to the fullest extent practicable under Section 6.

3. Product Standard: Three Tiers

Every material considered for use on LARMAC property falls into one of three tiers. The Allowed Products List in Section 3.4 is the controlling operational document. If a material is not on the List, it may not be routinely applied.

3.1 Tier 1 – Preferred: Non-Chemical and Cultural Methods

Cultural, mechanical, physical, and biological methods are the first response to pest and weed pressure and the routine foundation of ongoing maintenance:

- Hand and mechanical weeding.
- Steam and hot-foam weed control for curbs, sidewalks, tree wells, fence lines, and hardscape edges.
- Targeted grazing for appropriate fuel-modification zones and steep slopes, subject to applicable fire-safety and site-protection requirements.
- Mulch at specified depths; dense planting and groundcovers that occupy weed niches; appropriate pruning and plant spacing.
- Landscape modification and redesign to correct conditions that chronically support weeds, pests, excessive irrigation, or excessive maintenance, including plant replacement, conversion to appropriate groundcovers, changes in plant density or spacing, irrigation modification, soil rehabilitation, drainage correction, and transition to appropriate native or climate-adapted plant communities.
- Turf cultural program: aeration, compost topdressing, overseeding, correct mowing height, soil testing, and irrigation auditing to maintain dense, resilient turf.
- Biological and habitat controls, including raptor habitat, beneficial-insect habitat, and conservation of natural enemies.
- Exclusion, trapping, physical removal, habitat modification, and burrow management for vertebrate pests.

3.2 Tier 2 – Allowed With Posting: Organic-Compatible Materials

Where monitoring shows that Tier 1 methods have not achieved an established action threshold, or a documented technical limitation prevents Tier 1 from addressing the condition, an approved Tier 2 material may be considered for localized use. Cost, staffing, contractor preference, scheduling, equipment availability, or increased labor alone shall not constitute a technical limitation. The Tier 1 methods evaluated, claimed technical limitation, and basis for escalation shall be documented and made publicly available through the program dashboard. Eligible materials must meet at least one of the following criteria and must not fall within a Tier 3 prohibition:

- Listed by the Organic Materials Review Institute (OMRI) for the intended use;
- Allowed for organic production under the USDA National Organic Program (NOP); or
- Qualifies as a minimum-risk pesticide under FIFRA Section 25(b) and applicable California requirements.

EPA pesticide signal words shall be recorded on the Allowed Products List and included in worker-safety procedures and public notices where applicable, but a signal word alone does not determine chronic toxicity or automatically disqualify an otherwise organic-compatible product. Product eligibility is based on the full Tier 2 and Tier 3 standards, intended use, exposure pathway, label requirements, and site conditions.

All Tier 2 applications require the notice, posting, and recordkeeping described in Section 6.

3.3 Tier 3 – Prohibited From Routine Use

The following materials may not be routinely applied on LARMAC property. A Tier 3 material may be considered only through the written Limited-Use Exemption and Rescue Treatment Process in Section 7:

- **Synthetic pesticides and synthetic fertilizers, including but not limited to** synthetic herbicides, insecticides, fungicides, plant growth regulators, soil fumigants, and synthetic rodenticides.
- **Fertilizers or soil amendments containing sewage sludge or biosolids.**
- **Products containing ingredients identified by the State of California as known to cause cancer or reproductive/developmental toxicity.**
- **Ingredients subject to California groundwater-protection restrictions or special management requirements.**
- **Organophosphate, organochlorine, and carbamate pesticides.**
- **Ingredients classified by a recognized public-health authority as known, probable, or possible human carcinogens.**
- **Known or suspected endocrine-disrupting chemicals identified by a recognized public-health or regulatory authority.**
- **Second-generation anticoagulant rodenticides and all rodenticide baits;** rodent management proceeds through Tier 1 methods unless a Section 7 exemption is granted.
- **For clarity, glyphosate-based and glufosinate-ammonium herbicides** are prohibited from routine use, along with other products that do not meet the Tier 2 standard.

3.4 The Allowed Products List

The Landscape Advisory Committee, with support from the organic land care consultant and other qualified advisers as needed, shall maintain an Allowed Products List identifying every material approved for routine use. For each material, the List shall include: product name, manufacturer, EPA registration number if applicable, active ingredient(s), applicable OMRI/NOP/25(b) qualification, signal word if any, permitted sites, permitted application methods, target condition, and any site-specific restrictions.

The Board shall adopt the initial Allowed Products List and review it at least annually after consideration at a noticed Committee meeting. Additions or substitutions during the year require documented technical review and Board approval unless the Board has expressly delegated authority for minor administrative updates that do not change the applicable tier or standard. Materials not on the List are prohibited by default.

4. Site-Type Operations and Monitoring

Organic land management depends on site conditions, pest pressure, season, use intensity, irrigation, soil conditions, and safety requirements. The following operating standards establish the routine ceiling for each site type while allowing qualified professionals to respond to real-world conditions through documented monitoring and action thresholds. Section 7 remains the only pathway for non-organic rescue treatments.

Cultural practices are routine maintenance obligations under this Plan and shall not be treated as optional corrective measures implemented only after pest or weed pressure develops. Landscape contracts, staffing, budgets, work schedules, and scopes of work shall account for the soil, irrigation, mowing, pruning, mulching, plant-management, monitoring, and other cultural practices necessary to maintain the landscape under this standard.

4.1 Monitoring and Action Thresholds

Regular monitoring is a required part of landscape operations. Treatment decisions shall be based on observed conditions rather than a calendar spray schedule.

- Each site type shall have a defined inspection frequency appropriate to its use and season, with higher-frequency monitoring for sports fields, playgrounds, high-use turf, active pest outbreaks, and fire-safety areas.
- Before any Tier 2 treatment, staff or the contractor shall document the pest or condition, location, severity, likely contributing factors, action threshold, Tier 1 measures already used or considered, and the reason additional treatment is warranted.
- Action thresholds shall reflect function and safety, not zero-tolerance aesthetics. The presence of weeds, insects, or other pest activity shall not, by itself, constitute a treatment trigger unless the established site-specific action threshold has been met. Action thresholds shall be based on documented impacts to safety, function, infrastructure, plant health, or other defined management objectives rather than cosmetic zero tolerance.
- After treatment, the site shall be re-inspected and the outcome recorded so repeated treatments are not continued without evidence of effectiveness.
- Recurring problems shall trigger a review of irrigation, soil, mowing, drainage, plant selection, traffic patterns, habitat, and maintenance practices before additional product use is considered.

4.2 Operating Matrix

Site Type	Routine Program	Monitoring / Trigger	Treatment Ceiling
Sports fields, school fields, school sites	Soil testing; aeration; compost topdressing; overseeding; mowing-height management; irrigation audits; hand/mechanical weeding.	Frequent condition monitoring during active-use seasons; intervene when turf safety, playability, or significant plant health is affected.	Tier 1 routine. Tier 2 localized use only after documented threshold. No routine synthetic pesticides or fertilizers; Section 7 only.
Parks, playgrounds, picnic areas, dog park	Turf cultural program; mulched beds; hand/mechanical crews; steam/hot-foam on hardscape; exclusion and habitat modification.	Monitor high-contact and high-use areas for safety, usability, pest pressure, and recurring maintenance conditions.	Tier 1 routine. Tier 2 localized treatment only when necessary and safely isolatable. Section 7 only for non-organic rescue treatment.
Tree wells, planter beds, fence lines, curbs, sidewalks	Mulch to standard depth; dense planting; steam/hot-foam; string-trimming; hand removal; plant replacement where chronic weed pressure persists.	Routine route-based monitoring; treatment triggered by safety, infrastructure, visibility, or established maintenance thresholds—not cosmetic zero tolerance.	Tier 1 routine; Tier 2 spot use after threshold and documentation. Section 7 for non-organic rescue treatment.
Fuel-modification zones and steep slopes	Targeted grazing where appropriate; mechanical vegetation management; crews; low-fuel planting; erosion-conscious methods.	Seasonal and pre-deadline inspections coordinated with applicable fire-safety requirements; document vegetation height/load and access constraints.	Tier 1 preferred. Tier 2 organic-compatible spot use if needed. Section 7 permitted only where necessary to satisfy a documented health/safety or legal requirement.
Sienna Botanica, detention basins, waterways and riparian edges	Manual/mechanical vegetation management; access management; erosion prevention; targeted habitat practices.	Monitor vegetation, drainage, invasive pressure, standing water, bank stability, and downstream risk.	No routine product application directly to water. Any pesticide treatment in or immediately adjacent to water requires specific technical review, applicable regulatory authorization, and Section 7 if non-organic.
Slopes and low-contact landscaped areas	Mulch and appropriate groundcover conversion; targeted grazing where terrain and fire-safety requirements permit; mechanical vegetation management; phased replacement of weed-prone, high-maintenance, or poorly adapted plantings; erosion-conscious landscape practices.	Route-based and seasonal monitoring for fire load, erosion, slope stability, infrastructure, access, vegetation condition, and persistent weed pressure.	Tier 1 routine. Tier 2 spot use only after documented threshold and Tier 1 evaluation. Section 7 only for non-organic rescue treatment.
Paseos, pedestrian trails, parkways, sidewalks, sidewalk-adjacent landscaping, and pedestrian streetscapes	Hand and mechanical removal; appropriate mulch and groundcover; steam/hot-foam on paved edges and other appropriate locations; irrigation correction; dense planting; plant replacement; and phased landscape modification where recurring weed or pest pressure persists.	Frequent route-based monitoring appropriate to high-contact areas, with consideration of resident, child, and pet exposure; school and neighborhood walking routes; visibility; accessibility; infrastructure; and recurring landscape conditions.	Tier 1 routine. Tier 2 localized use only after documented threshold, evaluation of Tier 1 measures, advance notice, and confirmation that the treatment can be appropriately isolated from routine public and pet contact. Section 7 only for non-organic rescue treatment.

Site Type	Routine Program	Monitoring / Trigger	Treatment Ceiling
Cambridge Citrus Grove	Composted mulch; organic-compatible soil amendments and fertility; irrigation management; pruning; beneficial-insect habitat and releases where appropriate.	Seasonal orchard monitoring for pest presence, disease symptoms, nutrient stress, irrigation performance, and crop/tree health.	Tier 1 and approved Tier 2 materials only for routine care. Manage to an organic-compatible orchard standard.
Rodent and vertebrate pressure — all sites	Raptor habitat where appropriate; locked mechanical trap stations; exclusion; burrow and habitat management; sanitation/source reduction.	Document species, activity level, burrow/trap counts, location, attractants, and public-health or infrastructure impacts. Routine, recurring, or seasonally predictable rodent activity shall not, by itself, constitute a public-health emergency. Any proposed Section 7 exemption based on rodent or vertebrate pressure shall document the actual health or infrastructure risk and applicable Tier 1 measures, including sanitation, exclusion, habitat conditions, trapping, burrow management, source reduction, and landscape modification.	Tier 1 routine. No rodenticide baits absent a documented Section 7 public-health/safety exemption. Before a non-emergency Section 7 exemption is considered, the condition shall be reviewed by a qualified professional with demonstrated expertise in ecological, non-toxic, or least-toxic vertebrate pest management.

Raptor-based rodent management and anticoagulant rodent baits are incompatible strategies because poisoned rodents can expose predators and scavengers. The routine prohibition on rodenticide baits is what allows biological rodent management to function as part of the broader landscape system.

5. Organic Land Care Still Means Disclosed

This Plan standardizes organic land-care practices across LARMAC-managed sites and replaces informal, product-by-product decision-making with a consistent operating ceiling. Existing beneficial practices may continue where they comply with the Plan; the difference is that site standards, product eligibility, monitoring, and disclosure are no longer discretionary.

Clear disclosure is required even when a product is organic-compatible. Residents should not have to infer whether a material is hazardous based on the presence of a crew, a smell, a temporary closure, or a verbal warning. Advance notice identifies what is being applied and why, while field staff can direct residents to the same information.

Organic land care does not mean unannounced land care.

6. Notification, Posting, and Records

LARMAC shall maintain a disclosure-first system for material applications on community property. Notice requirements apply regardless of whether a product is synthetic, organic-compatible, pesticidal, or a fertility/soil input.

- **Advance posting — pest-control materials:** Signs shall be posted at regular public entry points to the treatment area at least four days before any Tier 2 pest-control application and shall remain for four days after treatment.
- **Advance posting — fertilizers and soil amendments:** Routine fertilizer, compost tea, soil amendment, and similar material applications shall be posted in advance at the treatment area and on the online dashboard. The Allowed Products List or site plan may establish standardized notice windows for recurring applications, provided residents can identify the product, site, and scheduled date before application.
- **Direct electronic notice:** In addition to physical posting and the online dashboard, LARMAC shall provide advance electronic notice for planned material applications occurring within at least 100 feet of residences and for applications in parks, playgrounds, school areas, sports fields, dog parks, paseos, pedestrian trails, and other high-contact public areas. Notice shall be sent using resident contact information maintained by LARMAC and geographically targeted by village, street, or affected area. Electronic notice shall be provided at least four days before a planned application, except where the emergency provisions of

Section 7.4 apply, and shall identify the product, application location, purpose, scheduled date, and applicable site-access or re-entry information.

- **Resident notification preferences:** LARMAC shall establish, through LaderaLife or its successor resident-communication platform, a system allowing residents to subscribe to additional application notices by geographic area or community location, including villages, streets, parks, schools or school routes, paseos, sports facilities, dog parks, and other community-use areas.
- **Sign content:** Product name; active ingredient(s), if applicable; organic qualification/status; target pest or purpose; signal word if any; re-entry or site-access instructions; applying company; LARMAC contact; scheduled date; and program-dashboard address or QR code.
- **Online dashboard:** Pending and completed applications shall be posted by location and date, together with the Allowed Products List, exemption requests and decisions, annual reports, and current program documents.
- **Recordkeeping:** For every material application, records shall include date and time, site, product, EPA registration number if applicable, quantity/rate, applicator, target pest or purpose, weather conditions where relevant, and any required follow-up. Contractors shall report records to LARMAC monthly and promptly upon request.
- **Annual report:** LARMAC shall publish an annual summary of material use by quantity and site, non-chemical work performed, exemptions requested/granted, complaints or incidents, and progress against the transition metrics in Section 8.

7. Limited-Use Exemption and Rescue Treatment Process

The objective of this Plan is to eliminate synthetic pesticide and synthetic fertilizer use from routine landscape management. A non-organic material is therefore not a routine “last resort.” It may be used only as a temporary rescue treatment or emergency response when the written requirements below are satisfied. The process shall be applied consistently with the NOFA Organic Land Care standards governing non-organic rescue treatments: the need must be documented, organic practices must remain the system of care, and the exception must be narrow, transparent, and corrective rather than recurring.

7.1 When an Exemption May Be Considered

A Tier 3 material, or any material not on the Allowed Products List, may be considered only for one of the following:

- A genuine and material threat to public health or safety, such as a stinging-insect emergency in a high-use area or a pest condition creating a documented disease/vector concern;
- A legally mandated pest, invasive-species, fire-safety, or other regulatory response that cannot reasonably be achieved within the routine Plan standard;
- A condition creating substantial and imminent damage to critical community infrastructure; or
- A site-specific rescue treatment necessary to prevent loss of a significant landscape asset after documented organic practices and approved Tier 2 alternatives have failed or are technically infeasible.

Cost, convenience, staffing limitations, contractor preference, routine weed pressure, schedule pressure, or a desire for a uniformly weed-free appearance are not sufficient grounds for an exemption.

7.2 Required Written Findings

Except for an immediate emergency under Section 7.4, the Board may grant an exemption only after a written application and Committee recommendation establish all of the following:

- The condition, site, severity, monitoring history, and action threshold are documented;
- Tier 1 and applicable Tier 2 alternatives have been evaluated and attempted unless a documented technical limitation prevents their use. Technical limitations shall be evaluated under the standard established in Section 3.2, with results documented and made publicly available through the program dashboard;
- The request shall identify the underlying cultural and landscape conditions evaluated, including as applicable soil condition, irrigation, drainage, mowing, pruning, plant selection, plant density, landscape design, habitat, sanitation, exclusion, maintenance frequency, traffic or use patterns, and opportunities for

landscape modification or replacement. The written findings shall identify which corrective measures were implemented, the results, any corrective measures that remain available, and why Tier 1 cultural practices and approved Tier 2 methods cannot reasonably address the documented condition within the required timeframe.

- A qualified adviser has identified the proposed material as the least-hazardous effective rescue option reasonably available for the specific condition;
- The treatment is limited to the smallest practicable area, lowest effective rate, narrowest application method, and shortest duration;
- Broadcast or calendar-based treatment is not permitted unless the written findings explain why a more targeted method cannot address the documented emergency;
- The site can be appropriately isolated, posted, and managed through the applicable re-entry period;
- A corrective plan is in place to address the underlying soil, irrigation, plant selection, habitat, maintenance, or operational condition so the rescue treatment does not become recurring maintenance; and
- The exemption identifies the product, site, target condition, application method, maximum quantity/rate, treatment window, and expiration date.

7.3 Approval, Duration, and Transparency

- Non-emergency exemptions require written Board approval following a noticed Committee review and recommendation.
- Each exemption is product-specific, site-specific, and time-limited. Approval expires when the authorized treatment course is complete and does not create precedent for future use.
- The exemption request, technical justification, decision, treatment date, application record, and follow-up outcome shall be posted on the public dashboard.
- All exemption treatments receive the notice and recordkeeping required by Section 6, plus any additional restrictions specified in the approval.
- Repeated requests for the same site or condition trigger mandatory consultant review of the underlying management plan before another exemption may be considered.

7.4 Immediate Health or Safety Emergencies

When delay would create an immediate threat to health or safety, the General Manager may authorize a narrowly tailored emergency treatment after consultation, when practicable, with a qualified adviser meeting the applicable qualification and independence requirements of Section 9. Notice shall be provided as early as circumstances allow. The written findings and application record must be posted promptly and presented for Committee and Board review within ten days. Emergency authority may not be used to avoid the ordinary exemption process for foreseeable or recurring conditions.

8. Transition Plan – Designed Not to Backtrack

Organic transitions fail when prohibited products are removed without first building the cultural, staffing, soil, irrigation, monitoring, and procurement systems that replace them. This Plan sequences those replacement systems before the full operating standard is expected across every site, and it embeds the standard in contracts and public reporting so implementation does not depend on informal practice or changing personnel.

Phase 1 – Months 0–3: Adopt and Baseline

- Board adopts the Plan. Routine use of Tier 3 materials is prohibited immediately, subject only to Section 7.
- Retain the organic land care consultant. Complete a geospatial community-wide site and vegetation inventory, representative soil testing, irrigation and condition baselines, and the initial Allowed Products List. The inventory shall identify, by location where practicable, existing vegetation and turf; irrigation type and condition; soil and drainage conditions; recurring weed, pest, and maintenance problems; high-contact pedestrian areas; fuel-modification requirements; erosion concerns; high-water-demand or chronically failing vegetation; and opportunities for landscape modification, redesign, or plant replacement.
- Establish monitoring protocols, action thresholds, posting, dashboard, and recordkeeping procedures.

- Brief all landscape and pest-management vendors on the interim and permanent standards.

Phase 2 – Months 3–12: Build the Replacement Systems

- Begin turf-renovation cycles on priority fields and parks: aeration, compost topdressing, overseeding, irrigation audits, mowing-height resets, and soil amendment as indicated by testing.
- Apply community mulch and bed-maintenance standards; procure steam/hot-foam service; implement targeted grazing where appropriate for fuel management.
- Expand non-toxic rodent management through exclusion, habitat modification, trapping, and raptor-support strategies where appropriate.
- Establish visible pilot sites that demonstrate the intended appearance, maintenance approach, and communication standard.
- Review labor hours, equipment, routing, and vendor scopes so resources shift from routine spraying to monitoring, cultural work, and targeted intervention.
- **LARMAC shall implement a phased transition of routine landscape-maintenance equipment to zero-emission electric equipment, prioritizing leaf blowers, string trimmers, hedge trimmers, and other frequently used small landscape equipment. LARMAC shall establish a written transition schedule with defined milestones and target dates. Continued use of gasoline-powered equipment after the applicable transition date must be supported by a documented, equipment-specific justification demonstrating that no commercially available zero-emission alternative can reasonably perform the required function. Cost alone, contractor preference, staffing convenience, or existing equipment ownership shall not constitute sufficient justification. Available public rebates and equipment-replacement incentives shall be used to offset transition costs where available.**

Phase 3 – Months 12–24: Full Standard and Contract Integration

- All site types operate under Section 4 prescriptions and monitoring protocols.
- Landscape and pest-management contracts are renewed, amended, or re-bid with this Plan incorporated into specifications and reporting requirements.
- Crew-hour allocations, equipment, and procurement are aligned with the organic maintenance model.
- First annual performance report is published, including material quantities, costs, exemptions, site outcomes, and progress against baseline.

8.1 Honest Expectations and Performance Metrics

- **Budget:** Implementation may shift spending from chemical products toward labor, equipment, soil and landscape improvements, monitoring, training, and other prevention systems. Fiscal implementation and phased funding shall be governed by Section 8.5.
- **Aesthetics:** Some sites may show more visible weeds during transition, particularly where turf, beds, irrigation, or plant selection require rehabilitation. Community communication should define success in terms of health, function, safety, and reduced reliance on pesticide inputs.
- **Performance metrics:** Annual reporting shall include total material use by tier, percentage of acreage managed without pesticide applications, number and type of exemptions, recurring-problem sites, cost per acre or service area where practical, monitoring outcomes, and progress on soil/turf/irrigation improvements.

8.2 Landscape and Plant Palette Transition

LARMAC shall establish a long-term process for transitioning landscape vegetation as plants are replaced, areas are renovated, and recurring maintenance problems are identified. New installations, replacement planting, and landscape redesign shall progressively favor locally appropriate native and climate-adapted vegetation suited to site-specific soil, irrigation, reclaimed-water, functional, and fire-safety conditions and designed to reduce long-term water, pesticide, fertilizer, and maintenance demands.

The community-wide site and vegetation inventory shall identify plantings and landscape conditions that repeatedly fail, require excessive water or maintenance, contribute to recurring weed or pest pressure, or require repeated intervention. These areas shall be prioritized for phased landscape modification or replacement.

Plant selection shall consider water demand, mature size, soil compatibility, irrigation and reclaimed-water conditions, fire-safety requirements, maintenance requirements, habitat value, pest susceptibility, and long-term resilience.

LARMAC shall maintain and periodically update an approved plant palette consistent with these standards.

8.3 Residential Landscape Standards

LARMAC shall review and update homeowner landscape and architectural approval standards so future residential landscape modifications support the long-term objectives of this Plan.

Updated standards shall:

- Expand and prioritize appropriate native and climate-adapted, lower-water-use vegetation.
- Remove or phase out plant selections or landscape requirements that create unnecessary water, pesticide, fertilizer, or maintenance demands.
- Allow and encourage appropriate groundcovers, soil-health practices, irrigation improvements, and landscape designs that reduce recurring weed and pest pressure.
- Require new and modified residential landscaping to comply with applicable fire-safety and vegetation-management requirements.
- Use information from the community-wide vegetation inventory and LARMAC-managed landscape experience to inform residential plant palettes and landscape standards.
- Prohibit Tier 3 pesticide use in privately maintained exterior landscape areas to the fullest extent permitted under LARMAC's governing authority and update applicable homeowner standards accordingly.

Existing approved residential landscaping shall not be required to be replaced solely because of adoption of this Plan. New installations, major modifications, and replacement planting shall progressively follow the updated standards.

8.3.1 Residential Pest-Management Provider Resource Program

LARMAC shall maintain a current list of pest-management and landscape-service providers that have demonstrated familiarity with the applicable requirements of this Plan and are willing to perform exterior pest-management and landscape-treatment work consistent with those standards.

The list shall be made available to residents as a resource when selecting providers. Residents shall not be required to use a listed provider solely by virtue of this Plan.

Regardless of the provider selected, privately maintained exterior landscaping subject to LARMAC's governing authority shall progressively comply with the applicable residential landscape and pest-management standards adopted under Section 8.3.

Providers seeking inclusion on the resource list shall maintain applicable licenses and insurance and agree to follow the relevant Plan requirements. LARMAC shall maintain a transparent and reasonably accessible process for qualified providers to be added to or removed from the list.

Inclusion on the list does not constitute an endorsement or guarantee of a provider's performance. The provider list shall be maintained separately from this Plan so individual providers may be added, removed, or updated without requiring amendment of the Plan.

8.4 Communitywide Landscape Alignment

LARMAC shall require non-LARMAC-maintained residential associations and sub-associations within Ladera Ranch to adopt landscape and pest-management standards consistent with the core requirements of this Plan to the fullest extent permitted under LARMAC's governing authority.

At a minimum, applicable sub-association standards shall address prohibited Tier 3 materials, approved-product standards, prevention and cultural practices, notification and recordkeeping requirements, and contractor compliance.

LARMAC shall establish and maintain an approved provider list for exterior pest-management and landscape-treatment work performed for separately maintained associations. Sub-associations subject to LARMAC contractor or vendor-approval authority shall use approved providers for covered work.

Approved providers shall maintain applicable licensing and insurance, demonstrate familiarity with applicable Plan standards, and agree to comply with relevant product, treatment, notification, recordkeeping, reporting, and contractor requirements.

LARMAC shall maintain a transparent and reasonably accessible process through which qualified providers may apply for inclusion on the approved list. The program shall not operate as an exclusive or closed vendor arrangement and shall not provide preferential access based on commercial relationships with LARMAC, its management company, existing contractors, or product vendors.

LARMAC shall make available model organic land-management specifications, approved-product standards, contractor requirements, notification procedures, plant-palette standards, training resources, and other implementation tools to assist separately maintained associations in meeting these standards.

Where practical, LARMAC shall explore coordinated consultant support, training, purchasing, equipment, and other resources that can facilitate implementation across separately maintained areas.

Implementation of this section shall not delay or condition implementation of this Plan on LARMAC-managed property.

The approved provider list for sub-associations shall be maintained separately from this Plan so providers can be added, removed, or updated administratively without requiring amendment of the Plan.

8.5 Fiscal Implementation and External Funding

Adoption of this Plan establishes the governing land-management standard but does not itself authorize unlimited or unspecified expenditures. Individual expenditures remain subject to applicable budgeting, procurement, contracting, and Board-approval processes; those processes shall be used to phase and implement the Plan, not to avoid its standards.

Where a capital-intensive or system-wide transition cannot be funded within a single budget cycle, LARMAC shall maintain a written and publicly available implementation and funding schedule identifying the required work, estimated cost, available and proposed funding, applicable grants or incentives, remaining funding need, and target completion date.

Fiscal constraints may affect sequencing and timing but shall not be used to waive, indefinitely defer, abandon, or avoid the standards of this Plan. Cost alone shall not justify routine Tier 3 use or continuation of a noncompliant maintenance practice.

LARMAC shall actively identify and pursue material grants, rebates, incentives, technical-assistance programs, public funding opportunities, and appropriate nonprofit or academic support reasonably applicable to implementation of this Plan.

LARMAC is not required to pursue a funding opportunity whose material conditions or administrative burden reasonably outweigh its anticipated benefit. A decision not to pursue an otherwise applicable material opportunity shall be documented and included in the program dashboard or annual report.

8.6 Documented Schedule Adjustments

If a required milestone cannot be completed on time due to circumstances outside LARMAC's reasonable control, LARMAC shall publicly document the affected requirement, reason for delay, actions taken, interim measures, any additional action or funding required, and a revised completion date.

A schedule adjustment changes timing only and does not waive or modify the substantive standards of this Plan. Cost, contractor preference, staffing convenience, failure to plan, or continuation of existing practices alone shall not justify a schedule adjustment.

8.7 Demonstration and Educational Leadership

LARMAC shall support the use of Ladera Ranch as a demonstration community for scalable, standards-based organic land management, including appropriate public, nonprofit, academic, and professional education, grants, case studies, training, site visits, and transparent reporting.

Demonstration or research activities shall focus on the standards, systems, practices, transition methods, and outcomes established by this Plan. They shall not authorize commercial product testing, preferential vendor access, or use of a material or treatment that would otherwise be prohibited or require a Section 7 exemption.

9. Consultant Engagement

LARMAC shall retain a qualified organic land care consultant to translate this Plan into site-specific operations, establish monitoring and action thresholds, train crews, review products and exemptions, and support implementation through at least the first two annual cycles.

The organic land care consultant shall be independent of LARMAC's landscape-maintenance, pest-management, and product vendors and shall not be employed by, subcontracted through, or financially dependent upon a contractor whose work the consultant is responsible for evaluating.

9.1 Scope of Work

- Community-wide site inventory and condition assessment; representative soil sampling and amendment prescriptions.
- Site-specific management plans for each Section 4 site type, with inspection frequencies, monitoring protocols, action thresholds, and escalation procedures.
- Initial Allowed Products List with full qualification documentation for Committee and Board adoption.
- Specifications and vendor identification for steam/hot-foam service, targeted grazing, raptor-support features, compost, mulch, and other replacement systems.
- Crew training in English and Spanish where feasible; revised maintenance specifications, work practices, and contract exhibits.
- Technical review of proposed Section 7 rescue treatments and assistance identifying compliant organic alternatives.
- Transition budget model and two years of quarterly implementation review, including annual-report data.

9.2 Qualifications

- At least one NOFA Accredited Organic Land Care Professional (AOLCP) shall serve on the engagement team.
- A California-licensed Pest Control Adviser (PCA) on or available to the team when pesticide recommendations require licensed advice.
- Documented experience implementing municipal, district, campus, HOA, or similarly scaled organic/least-toxic landscape programs, including turf-intensive properties where possible.
- Demonstrated ability to develop monitoring thresholds, train field crews, manage transition budgets, and produce public-facing reports.
- Demonstrated expertise in soil biology, irrigation optimization, and landscape transition is required on the engagement team. Targeted grazing and Spanish-language field-training experience are preferred.
- Demonstrated expertise in ecological, non-toxic, or least-toxic vertebrate pest management shall be available on the engagement team or through a qualified specialist when vertebrate pest-management issues require that expertise.

9.3 Selection

Evaluation should prioritize demonstrated programs that remained operational and effective after transition, technical depth, ability to work with field crews and contractors, transparency, and practical experience over lowest price alone. Finalists should be asked to identify the Plan's weakest operational assumption and explain how they would test or improve it during implementation.

9.4 Independence and Commercial Interests

Technical advice concerning product eligibility, treatment standards, exemptions, or Plan amendments shall be provided by qualified advisers independent of commercial product sales.

Individuals whose primary role is the sale, marketing, distribution, promotion, or representation of products being evaluated under this Plan shall not serve as independent technical advisers. Manufacturers and vendors may provide factual product documentation, but it shall be independently reviewed before being relied upon.

Consultants and technical advisers shall disclose material financial or commercial relationships with manufacturers, distributors, applicators, contractors, or vendors whose products or services may be affected by their recommendations.

A contractor or vendor shall not have sole authority to determine that a Plan requirement is technically unavailable or impracticable. Material technical determinations supporting a Tier 2 escalation, equipment exception, less-protective practice, or Section 7 request shall receive independent technical review.

10. Governance and Amendment

- The Landscape Advisory Committee reviews the program at least quarterly, including monitoring results, material applications, exemptions, complaints or incidents, site outcomes, and resident feedback.
- The Allowed Products List is reviewed at least annually and adopted by the Board. Material changes to the Plan also require Board approval after Committee review.
- All governing documents, Allowed Products Lists, site-management standards, exemption records, application records, and annual reports are maintained as public-facing program documents on the dashboard.
- Contracts and scopes of work shall be reviewed for consistency with the Plan at renewal, amendment, and re-bid.
- No amendment may convert a prohibited Tier 3 material into a routine-use product without a formal amendment to the Plan adopted by the Board.
- Where the Plan is silent, LARMAC shall apply the guiding principles in Section 1, applicable law and label requirements, and the most protective practice capable of meeting the documented site-safety and functional requirement. Any material technical limitation used to justify a less-protective practice shall be independently reviewed, documented, and made publicly available.

IMPLEMENTATION STANDARD

Prevent first. Monitor routinely. Use organic-compatible materials only when needed. Treat non-organic rescue products as transparent, time-limited exceptions—not maintenance tools.