

BOARD MEETING DATE: July 12, 2019

AGENDA NO. 5

PROPOSAL: Approve Funds to Continue Year-Round Electric Lawn Mower Rebate Program

SYNOPSIS: In April 2017, the Electric Lawn Mower Rebate Program was launched. Participants receive a rebate through an online application process after purchasing a new cordless battery-electric lawn mower and scrapping their old gasoline-powered lawn mower at a participating licensed dismantler. This year-round program open to residents in the South Coast AQMD's jurisdiction has been successful and is nearly out of funds. This action is to approve the use of \$250,000 from the Rule 2202 Air Quality Investment Fund (27) to continue the year-round Electric Lawn Mower Rebate Program.

COMMITTEE: Mobile Source, June 21, 2019; Recommended for Approval

RECOMMENDED ACTION:

Approve the use of \$250,000 from the Rule 2202 Air Quality Investment Fund (27) to continue the year-round Electric Lawn Mower Rebate Program.

Wayne Natri
Executive Officer

MMM:NB:LCM:DAH

Background

In March 2017, the Board approved the year-round residential electric lawn mower rebate, replacing a seasonal exchange program. While the exchange program had been conducted for 14 years, the last two years of the seasonal program had experienced declining participation due to severe drought conditions and an increase in the availability of electric lawn mowers on the market. In April 2017, the year-round Electric Lawn Mower Rebate Program was launched on a first-come, first-served basis, whereby residents living within the South Coast AQMD jurisdiction turn in their fully functional old gasoline-powered lawn mower to a participating dismantler for permanent destruction and receive a rebate check based on the purchase price of a new

cordless battery-operated electric lawn mower through an online application. The public has the flexibility of purchasing their electric mower from an extensive list of manufacturer-authorized retailers or dealers, including hardware and home improvement stores, and purchases can be made both online and in-store.

The rebates, which are based on retail purchase prices and do not include taxes, fees, accessories or delivery charges, are as follows:

- \$150 for a purchase price of \$250 or less;
- \$200 for a purchase price of \$251 to \$400; and
- \$250 for a purchase price of more than \$400.

In January 2018, staff provided a six-month progress report to the Mobile Source Committee on the new rebate program, reflecting a successful launch which has steadily grown into a popular program. From 2017 to 2018, there was a 60% increase in the number of rebate applications. In the first two years, over 1,000 rebates were provided, with the vast majority (89%) of the applicants purchasing the more expensive lawn mowers for the larger rebates. In-store purchases continue to outpace online purchases by nearly 60%. All demographics are participating from all four counties, with a larger portion in Los Angeles County given its size and population. There were 20 companies manufacturing cordless electric lawnmowers when the program first launched. There are now nearly 30 manufacturers reflecting growing demand and market competition for such cleaner technologies and a better awareness of the availability of these cleaner technologies. Lists of both eligible electric lawn mower manufacturers and participating dismantlers are provided on South Coast AQMD's website for easy reference by interested residents.

When the program launched, a number of outreach mechanisms were employed. Information was distributed through South Coast AQMD's website, including emails to over 10,000 lawn mower exchange newsletter subscribers. Flyers were printed in English, Chinese, Korean and Spanish highlighting the new rebate program and online application form and distributed at events throughout the four-county region. A short video on the new online application process was highlighted on South Coast AQMD's webpage. Staff worked with local lawn and garden retail outlets such as Home Depot and Lowe's and manufacturers of electric lawn mowers. A short survey completed at the end of the rebate process indicates that residents primarily hear about the program through word of mouth and city websites, and the user-friendly process and year-round availability have gotten positive feedback.

When the program launched in April 2017, the Board approved an initial funding allocation of \$250,000 from the Rule 2202 Air Quality Investment Fund (27) and authorized the Executive Officer to issue rebates under the terms of the program. At this time, the program is nearly out of funds and staff recommends allocating additional funds to continue offering the electric lawn mower rebate.

Proposal

This action is to approve the use of \$250,000 from the Rule 2202 Air Quality Investment Fund (27) to continue the year-round Electric Lawn Mower Rebate Program. This year-round rebate program will continue to provide convenience and flexibility for residents in the South Coast Air Basin, saving on a broad selection of mower brands and price ranges. This rebate program will continue until all funds are expended, or approximately two years, at which time staff may return to the Board to seek approval for additional funds.

Benefits to South Coast AQMD

The Electric Lawn Mower Rebate Program scraps older gas-powered mowers and replaces them with zero emissions mowers, thereby reducing VOCs and other smog-forming pollutants in the South Coast Air Basin. Zero emission lawn mowers are not required under CARB's small off-road engines regulation, so these are surplus emission reductions for the region.

Resource Impacts

There are sufficient funds in the Rule 2202 Air Quality Investment Fund (27).