



# Media Release

## **URBAN WATER CONSERVATION DROPS FROM 22 PERCENT TO NEAR 9 PERCENT IN JANUARY**

***ADDITIONAL MANDATORY CONSERVATION MEASURES TO BE CONSIDERED MARCH 17***

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SACRAMENTO – As California enters a fourth year of drought, the State Water Resources Control Board (State Water Board) announced a steep decline in water conservation during the month of January, considered the driest January since meteorological records have been kept. Additionally, per capita water use inched up in January as compared to December 2014.

In the most recent statewide survey of nearly 400 urban water retailers, the amount of water conserved by the state's large water agency customers declined from 22 percent in December 2014 to approximately 8.8 percent in January in year-over-year water use comparisons. January followed a very wet December 2014, which reduced the need for outdoor water use and likely contributed to the high conservation rate in December.

"Today's announcement is a disappointment, but not a surprise considering how dry January was," said State Water Board Chair Felicia Marcus. "Clearly state residents used their outdoor irrigation in January, which appears to account for the decline in water conservation. At a time when communities are running out of water, fields continue to remain fallowed for a second year, and fish and wildlife are suffering, the prospect that this year will be worse than last year is very real. Urban water users must cut back more – to extend their own supplies and to allow for flexibility in the system. Whether in self-interest or community spirit, conservation is by far the smartest and most cost effective way to deal with this difficult drought."

On March 17, the State Water Board will discuss renewing an [emergency regulation supporting water conservation](#) originally adopted in July 2014, which restricts outdoor water use and authorizes penalties for water waste. The emergency regulation must be renewed before April 25. Water board members today directed staff to offer additional measures intended to increase conservation statewide.

On Tuesday, board members discussed the importance of the State Water Board having measures in place for 2015 to assist water districts, and their customers, in making sure water conservation remains a priority statewide.



“We are in an extremely serious situation. We can and must do better conserving our water during 2015 because there’s just no guarantee this horrendous drought will end anytime soon,” Marcus said. “If 2015, and then 2016 continue to be dry, we will look back on today, and this month, let alone the last year, wishing we’d saved more water now. This board is prepared to make some tough decisions in the coming months, including adopting permanent, rather than emergency water conservation measures, going forward. It is that serious.”

## Water Conservation Efforts Decline

Year-over-year monthly residential water savings declined statewide to 8.8 percent in January, down more than 60 percent from December 2014. Broken down by hydrologic region, the results show that some parts of the state saved much less water in January than in any month since reporting requirements began. A few hydrologic regions sustained significant water conservation rates in January.

However, from June to January 2014, more than 146 billion gallons of water have been saved compared with the same period in 2013 – enough to supply 1.96 million California residents for a year.

## Water Production Reductions from June 2014 to January 2015

Hydrologic Region	Jun-14	Jul-14	Aug-14	Sep-14	Oct-14	Nov-14	Dec-14	Jan-15	Trend
Central Coast	9.5%	13.7%	15.3%	16.0%	14.1%	20.9%	29.1%	8.2%	
Colorado River	6.6%	3.1%	7.0%	6.3%	5.3%	6.6%	6.3%	12.3%	
North Coast	3.8%	10.4%	13.2%	9.5%	22.1%	19.5%	15.9%	17.2%	
North Lahontan	3.7%	5.0%	13.7%	-0.1%	-6.3%	-2.5%	14.2%	4.9%	
Sacramento River	11.9%	19.7%	22.0%	16.4%	18.6%	25.7%	21.5%	6.9%	
San Francisco Bay	10.3%	12.9%	14.9%	15.4%	15.3%	18.2%	21.6%	3.7%	
San Joaquin River	6.6%	12.3%	13.2%	9.9%	9.9%	20.8%	18.7%	11.4%	
South Coast	-0.3%	1.7%	7.9%	7.5%	1.9%	3.4%	23.3%	9.2%	
South Lahontan	5.2%	3.8%	9.5%	7.9%	0.0%	1.2%	9.1%	13.8%	
Tulare Lake	8.2%	11.7%	12.9%	11.8%	6.3%	17.3%	27.4%	13.9%	
<b>Statewide</b>	<b>4.4%</b>	<b>7.5%</b>	<b>11.5%</b>	<b>10.2%</b>	<b>6.9%</b>	<b>10.1%</b>	<b>22.2%</b>	<b>8.8%</b>	

The decline in water conservation by two of the most populated regions in the state did impact the statewide average for January. The South Coast hydrologic region decline, with 9.2 percent savings for January compared to 23.3 percent for December, had an impact on the state average because 56 percent of all the residential water customers statewide are in the South Coast hydrologic region. Representing approximately 20 percent of all residential water customers statewide, the San Francisco Bay Area hydrologic region decline -- 3.7 percent savings for January compared to 21.6 percent for December-- definitely impacted the statewide average.

The report also found that in January, 95 percent of water agencies reporting had instituted outdoor water use restrictions. Outdoor water use restrictions are a key requirement for urban water suppliers under the [Emergency Water Conservation Regulation](#), because outdoor watering accounts for as much as 80 percent of urban water use in some areas.

## **Per Capita Daily Water Use Rises Slightly**

In addition to the January conservation data, the State Water Board also reported residential gallons per-capita per day (R-GPCD) for January. The report estimates daily water use by residential customers for nearly 400 urban water agencies statewide.

The statewide R-GPCD average for January was 72.6 gallons per person, a slight increase from December 2014 when the statewide average was 67.2 gallons per person, per day. State Water Board staff continues to study this trend in an effort to understand what is driving the reduction in water use in some hydrologic regions, but not in others.

The water use reports are a requirement of the Emergency Water Conservation Regulation adopted by the State Water Board in July 2014 and are provided to the Board monthly by urban water suppliers, along with total water conservation for each month. The complete report is posted [here](#).

According to the R-GPCD data, water use varies widely by hydrologic region and showed consistent declines in water use during this fourth month of reporting. At the low end, the San Francisco Bay hydrologic region averaged 56.3 gallons per person, per day. On the high end, the Colorado River hydrologic region averaged 147.2 gallons per person, per day.

Examples of some communities with the respective R-GPCD averages for January 2015 in various hydrologic areas (in parenthesis) include: San Francisco Public Utilities Commission (San Francisco Bay) with 45 R-GPCD; city of Santa Cruz (Central Coast) with 46 R-GPCD; city of Santa Rosa (North Coast) with 49 R-GPCD; California-American Water Company Monterey District (Central Coast) with 52 R-GPCD; city of Stockton (San Joaquin River) with 52 R-GPCD; city of San Diego (South Coast) with 55 R-GPCD; San Jose Water Company (San Francisco Bay) with 58 R-GPCD; California Water Services Company, Bakersfield (Tulare Lake) with 63 R-GPCD; city of Sacramento (Sacramento River) with 63 R-GPCD; Los Angeles Department of Water and Power (South Coast) with 70 R-GPCD; city of Riverside (South Coast) with 78 R-GPCD, and Sacramento County Water Agency (Sacramento River) with 82 R-GPCD.

For additional information on water use, please visit the following resources:

- The Pacific Institute has an R-GPCD mapping tool [here](#).
- The State Drinking Water Program has an urban water R-GPCD Calculator [here](#).

## Background

In his Jan. 17, 2014, Emergency Drought Proclamation, Gov. Jerry Brown called for Californians to voluntarily reduce their water use by 20 percent. The trend of increasing reductions and specific local data shows that many California communities have met and even exceeded the call to conserve. However, more can and must be done to protect water supplies should the drought persist. Current forecasts indicate that Californians cannot count upon a wet winter to end the drought.

The Emergency Water Conservation Regulation will be in effect until April 25, 2015, and will likely be extended if drought conditions persist. The State Water Board will closely monitor the implementation of the regulations and the weather over the coming months to determine if further restrictions are needed.

During 2014, the State Water Board took action to increase access to recycled water in an effort to augment scarce water supplies. Water recycling is the use of treated municipal wastewater for beneficial purposes, such as agricultural and landscape irrigation, industrial processes and replenishing groundwater basins. In March 2014, the Board approved new low-interest financing terms for water recycling projects to help California produce an additional 150,000 acre-feet of recycled water annually. The effort makes \$800 million available for projects such as recycled water treatment and distribution and storage facilities that can be completed by 2017. In June 2014, the Board adopted a general order that makes it easier for communities to use non-potable recycled water for agriculture, landscape and golf course irrigation and other uses. During the year, various regional boards took action to approve the use of recycled water for local projects under their jurisdiction.

As part of its efforts to build on conservation gains statewide, on Feb. 17 State Water Board members heard presentations by staff on ideas presented at a Dec. 17, 2014 [water conservation workshop](#) in Los Angeles. Multiple topics were addressed and actions were identified that could be implemented by the State Water Board to sustain and possibly improve water conservation efforts during 2015. The staff has been asked to bring the ideas to the March 17 Board meeting when the State Water Board is expected to decide to renew the emergency water conservation regulation, and discuss strengthening water conservation measures.

Visit [SaveOurWater.com](http://SaveOurWater.com) to find out how everyone can do their part, and visit [Drought.CA.Gov](http://Drought.CA.Gov) to learn more about how California is dealing with the effects of the drought.