



# Media Release

## **STATE REDUCES WATER USE BY NEARLY 29 PERCENT IN ADVANCE OF JUNE CONSERVATION MANDATES**

***INDIVIDUAL WATER USE CONTINUES TO DECLINE; ENFORCEMENT EFFORTS GROW***

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**SACRAMENTO** – As the State continues to experience near-record and record hot conditions, increasing the severity of the drought’s effects on communities, agriculture and the environment, California’s urban water suppliers reported the highest level of conservation achieved to date for the month of May.

The State Water Resources Control Board (State Water Board) announced today that statewide residential water use declined 28.9 percent in May, the steepest drop since Governor Jerry Brown called on all Californians to conserve water in the face of limited supplies.

“The numbers tell us that more Californians are stepping up to help make their communities more water secure, which is welcome news in the face of this dire drought,” said State Water Board Chair Felicia Marcus. “That said, we need all Californians to step up--and keep it up--as if we don’t know when it will rain and snow again, because we don’t. If the drought continues beyond this year, we’ll all be glad we did.”

Enforcement and compliance statistics reported for the month of May also indicate that water suppliers are following up on water waste complaints and issuing formal warnings and penalties against alleged violators. Complaints are a very important tool for identifying leaks and overwatering that could go undetected for weeks resulting in millions of gallons of wasted water.

This latest information comes ahead of the June reporting period, the first month that the new statewide conservation standards are in effect and measured.

Encouraged by the newest data, State Water Board officials called on all Californians to continue conserving as the drought persists and further reduce their water use in the critical summer months of June, July, August and beyond. The Board remains cautiously optimistic, acknowledging that rain in some parts of the state during May likely contributed to the higher conservation rate. The conservation mandate leaves it up to locals to decide where to



conserve, but encourages water suppliers to focus on reducing outdoor irrigation because it can account for up to 80 percent of residential water use in hotter climates and is easy to do.

## **May Highlights:**

- The amount of water saved by the State's large urban water suppliers increased from 13.6 percent in April to approximately 28.9 percent in May, in same-month water use comparisons of 2015 to 2013. The year 2013 serves as the baseline for determining water savings statewide. The cumulative statewide percent reduction for June 2014-May 2015 (12 months) is 11 percent.
- The statewide residential gallons per capita per day (R-GPCD) for May 2015 was 87.5 gallons, a decrease compared the April 2015 statewide average R-GPCD of 90.5 gallons.
- Between June 2014 and May 2015, approximately 237.3 billion gallons (728,136 acre-feet) of water were saved, as compared to the same time period for the year prior. This is enough water to supply approximately 2.38 million Californians for one year.

## **Enforcement Data Indicates Increased Awareness and Response**

In April, water suppliers began reporting on their compliance and enforcement efforts to promote conservation and reduce water waste. The May statistics demonstrate community and water supplier commitment to identify and correct wasteful practices:

- 28,555 water waste complaints were reported statewide (by 346 suppliers);
- 36,159 formal warnings were issued for water waste statewide (by 269 suppliers);
- 1,786 penalties were issued statewide (by 49 suppliers), and
- as of the end of May, seven (2 percent) suppliers had not imposed mandatory irrigation restrictions and 60 (15 percent) suppliers reported that they still allow outdoor watering 7 days per week.

The May urban water supplier enforcement statistics can be found [here](#).

## **Water Conservation Efforts Improve**

Monthly residential water savings statewide were 28.9 percent in May compared with May 2013. That is up significantly from the 13.6 percent water savings in April compared with April 2013. Broken down by hydrologic region, the results, which show that all parts of the state showed improvements compared to April, can be found [here](#).

The water use reports are a requirement of the drought emergency water conservation regulation adopted by the State Water Board in July 2014 and are provided to the State Water Board monthly by urban water suppliers. The complete report is posted [here](#).

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

- The State Water Board's Drinking Water Program has an urban water R-GPCD Calculator [here](#).

## May's Top Performers

"It is clear from this report that many communities have made a commitment as Californians to scale back outdoor watering and conserve – and the effort shows," said Marcus. "The hot summer months are here. Californians are creative. We can fix the leaks, let the lawn go brown, and take shorter showers while using just enough water to save trees and prevent disease."

"We urge other communities that are not meeting their conservation standards to join communities like Fresno and San Jose in water conservation leadership," said Marcus. "Collectively, we can do this."

Dozens of communities achieved conservation levels of upwards of, and more than 30 percent in May 2015. Some of the stand out communities include: California Water Service-Bakersfield (37 percent), Serrano Water District (Orange County, 43 percent), Lake Hemet Municipal Water District (Riverside County, 49 percent), Town of Hillsborough (San Mateo County, 49 percent), and Sacramento Suburban Water District (45 percent), San Jose Water Company (36 percent), City of San Diego (26 percent), City of Riverside (30 percent) and Cucamonga Valley Water District (35 percent).

These high achievers include both inland and coastal communities, proving that it can be done.

Communities that have accelerated their conservation efforts include:

- The City of Folsom, which in May achieved a 38 percent savings in water use, exceeding the City's 32 percent conservation standard. In May Folsom announced a plan to reduce water use citywide by 32 percent, as well as a comprehensive rebate program for its water customers. By June 1, the City planned to reduce watering in parks by 33 percent, remove turf and retrofit irrigation in more than 30 medians, and turn off irrigation on nearly one acre of ornamental streetscapes, among other actions.
- The City of Fresno achieved 33 percent savings in water use in May, surpassing its 28 percent conservation standard. The Fresno City Council recently passed an updated

Water Conservation Act that changed the spring/summer watering schedule to start two months later on May 1, and changed the watering times to run between 9 p.m. and 6 a.m.

- The Santa Margarita Water District, which had been averaging only 3 percent savings over the past 11 months, dramatically increased its level of conservation to 18 percent in May. To further reduce potable water use, the Lake Mission Viejo Association recently voted to switch from the use of potable water to advanced purified wastewater to refill Lake Mission Viejo. During June through August, the District limits outdoor watering to no more 3 days and 36 minutes total per week during the summer.

## **Background**

In his April 1 Executive Order, Governor Brown mandated a 25 percent water use reduction for cities and towns across California.

In May, the State Water Board adopted an [emergency regulation](#) requiring an immediate 25 percent reduction in overall potable urban water use statewide beginning in June, in accordance with Governor Edmund G. Brown Jr.'s April 1 [Executive Order](#). The Executive Order required, for the first time in the state's history, mandatory conservation for all residents and directed several state agencies, including the State Water Board, to take immediate action to safeguard the state's remaining potable urban water supplies in preparation for a possible fifth year of drought.

The regulation adopted by the State Water Board on May 5 uses a sliding scale for setting conservation standards, so that communities that have already reduced their R-GPCD through past conservation will have lower mandates than those that have not made such gains since the last major drought. The regulation places each urban water supplier into one of eight tiers which are assigned a conservation standard, ranging between 8 percent and 36 percent.

Beginning with the June conservation data submitted by the more than 400 urban water suppliers, water suppliers will be expected to meet or exceed their [individual conservation tier](#).

Each month, the State Water Board will compare every urban water supplier's water use with their use for the same month in 2013 to determine if they are on track for meeting their conservation standard. Local water agencies will determine the most cost effective and locally appropriate way to achieve their standard. The State Water Board will be working closely with water suppliers to implement the regulation and improve local efforts that are falling short.



## Media Release

For more than two years, California has been dealing with the effects of drought. To learn about all the actions the state has taken to manage our water system and cope with the impacts of the drought, visit [Drought.CA.Gov](http://Drought.CA.Gov).

Every Californian should take steps to conserve water. Find out how at [SaveOurWater.com](http://SaveOurWater.com).

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