

**STATE WATER RESOURCES CONTROL BOARD  
BOARD MEETING SESSION – OFFICE OF RESEARCH, PLANNING AND PERFORMANCE  
MARCH 17, 2015**

**ITEM 7**

**SUBJECT**

CONSIDERATION OF A PROPOSED RESOLUTION AMENDING AND READOPTING DROUGHT-RELATED EMERGENCY REGULATIONS FOR URBAN WATER CONSERVATION

**DISCUSSION**

On January 17, 2014, Governor Brown declared a drought state of emergency. On April 25, 2014, the Governor signed an Executive Order calling on the State to redouble its drought actions. Among other things, the Executive Order directed the State Water Board to adopt emergency regulations as it deemed necessary, pursuant to Water Code section 1058.5, to ensure that Urban Water Suppliers implement drought response plans to limit outdoor irrigation and other wasteful water practices.

On July 15, 2014, the State Water Board adopted [Resolution 2014-0038](#), which adopted an emergency regulation for water conservation that added new sections to Title 23 of the California Code of Regulations. The existing emergency regulation became effective on July 28, 2014 upon approval by the Office of Administrative Law.

The existing water conservation emergency regulation includes prohibitions on certain water uses and requires larger urban water suppliers to activate their Water Shortage Contingency Plan to a level where outdoor irrigation restrictions are mandatory. In communities where no water shortage contingency plan exists, the regulation requires that water suppliers either limit outdoor irrigation to twice a week or implement other comparable conservation actions. Finally, large urban water suppliers must report water use on a monthly basis to track progress.

Absent further action, the existing emergency regulation will expire on April 25, 2015. The U.S. Drought Monitor, however, currently classifies almost the entire State of California as experiencing severe to exceptional drought conditions. In average years, the snowpack stores water during the winter months and releases it through melting in the spring and summer to replenish rivers and reservoirs. However, warm and relatively dry weather conditions this year have reduced the amount of snowpack in California's mountains. As of March 3, 2015, the Sacramento Region cumulative precipitation was 87 percent of average for that date (8-Station Index). However, most of that precipitation fell as rain, and Northern Sierra snow water content is extremely low, at 16 percent of average. Similarly, Central and Southern Sierra snowpack is at 20 and 21 percent of average, respectively. Continued action is, therefore, needed to ensure urban water suppliers and all Californians are taking sufficient actions to conserve water and preserve the State's water supply. In addition to continuing the requirements contained in the existing emergency regulation, the following updates are proposed:

- A prohibition on irrigation of turf or ornamental landscapes during and 48 hours following measurable precipitation.

- Hospitality sector restrictions requiring that water only be served on request in restaurants and bars, and requiring the operators of hotels and motels to offer patrons the option of not having their towels and linens washed daily.
- A requirement for urban water suppliers that do not already have a limit on the number of days that outdoor irrigation of ornamental landscapes or turf with potable water is allowed, to limit such irrigation to no more than two days per week.
- A requirement that urban water suppliers promptly notify their customers when they are aware of leaks within the customer's control.
- Additional reporting requirements for urban water suppliers on compliance and enforcement efforts being undertaken within their service areas.
- Clarification that small urban water suppliers are required to limit outdoor irrigation of ornamental landscapes or turf with potable water to no more than two days per week or implement other mandatory conservation measures intended to achieve a 20 percent reduction in water consumption.

### **POLICY ISSUE**

Should the State Water Board adopt the proposed resolution and accompanying regulation?

### **FISCAL IMPACT**

Fiscal considerations are addressed as a part of drought funding.

### **REGIONAL BOARD IMPACT**

None.

### **STAFF RECOMMENDATION**

Staff recommends that the State Water Board adopt the proposed resolution adopting the emergency regulation.

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## STATE WATER RESOURCES CONTROL BOARD RESOLUTION NO. 2015-

### TO ADOPT AN EMERGENCY REGULATIONS FOR STATEWIDE URBAN WATER CONSERVATION

#### WHEREAS:

1. On April 25, 2014, Governor Edmund G. Brown Jr. issued an executive order (April 2014 Proclamation) to strengthen the State's ability to manage water and habitat effectively in drought conditions, and called on all Californians to redouble their efforts to conserve water. The April 2014 Proclamation finds that the continuous severe drought conditions present urgent challenges across the State, including water shortages in communities and for agricultural production, increased wildfires, degraded habitat for fish and wildlife, threat of saltwater contamination, and additional water scarcity, if drought conditions continue into 2015. The April 2014 Proclamation also suspends the environmental review required by the California Environmental Quality Act to allow the emergency regulation and other actions to take place as quickly as possible;
2. The April 2014 Proclamation refers to the [Governor's Proclamation No. 1-17-2014](#), issued on January 17, 2014, declaring a drought State of Emergency to exist in California due to severe drought conditions (January 2014 Proclamation). The January 2014 Proclamation finds that dry conditions and lack of precipitation present urgent problems to drinking water supplies and cultivation of crops, which put farmers' long-term investments at risk. The conditions also threaten the survival of animals and plants that rely on California's rivers, including many species in danger of extinction. The January 2014 Proclamation also calls on all Californians to reduce their water usage by 20 percent;
3. On December 22, 2014, in light of the continued lack of rain, Governor Brown issued [Executive Order B-28-14](#), which extends the California Environmental Quality Act suspension through May 31, 2016 for Water Code section 13247 and certain activities identified in the January 2014 and April 2014 proclamations;
4. Drought conditions are continuing. As of March 3, 2015, snow water equivalents for the Northern, Central, and Southern Sierra regions were at 16 percent, 20 percent, and 21 percent of normal for that date, respectively. Additionally, most reservoirs are less than 60 percent full and January 2015 was one of the driest months ever recorded in California history. Moreover, many communities face the prospect of needing emergency drinking water supplies;
5. The likelihood that any additional precipitation will significantly reduce the severity of drought conditions this year is extremely low;
6. Water Code section 1058.5 grants the State Water Board the authority to adopt emergency regulations in certain drought years in order to: "prevent the waste, unreasonable use, unreasonable method of use, or unreasonable method of diversion, of water, to promote water recycling or water conservation, to require curtailment of diversions when water is not available under the diverter's priority of right, or in furtherance of any of the foregoing, to require reporting of diversion or use or the preparation of monitoring reports";

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7. On July 15, 2014, the State Water Board adopted an emergency regulation to support water conservation ([Resolution No. 2014-0038](#)), and that regulation became effective July 28, 2014 upon approval by the Office of Administrative Law (OAL);
8. The current emergency regulation will expire on April 25, 2015;
9. The current emergency regulation has supported Californians' water conservation efforts, with over 119 billion gallons saved from August 2014 through January 2015;
10. Many Californians have taken bold steps over the years and in this year to reduce water use; nevertheless, the dire nature of the current drought requires additional conservation actions from residents and businesses. Some severely-affected communities have implemented water rationing, limiting water use in some cases to only 50 gallons per person per day, foregoing showers, laundry, toilet flushing, and all outdoor watering;
11. Water conservation is the easiest, most efficient and most cost-effective way to quickly reduce water demand and extend supplies into the next year, providing flexibility for all California communities. Water saved this summer is water available later in the season or next year, giving water suppliers the flexibility to manage their systems efficiently;
12. In many areas, 50 percent or more of daily water use is for lawns and outdoor landscaping. Outdoor water use is generally discretionary, and many irrigated landscapes would not suffer greatly from receiving a decreased amount of water;
13. Most urban water suppliers have placed restrictions on outdoor watering, but the State Water Board has nevertheless received many reports of excessive water use;
14. Education and enforcement against water waste is a key tool in conservation programs. When conservation becomes a social norm in a community, the need for enforcement is reduced or eliminated;
15. Public information and awareness is critical to achieving conservation goals, and the Save Our Water campaign, run jointly by the Department of Water Resources (DWR) and the Association of California Water Agencies, is an excellent resource for conservation information and messaging that is integral to effective drought response (<http://saveourwater.com>);
16. Other parts of the world have faced social and economic hardship due to severe drought. Californians must continue to make lifestyle changes, including landscape choices that conserve even more water;
17. On March 6, 2015, the State Water Board issued public notice that it would consider the adoption of the emergency regulation at the Board's regularly-scheduled March 17, 2015 public meeting, in accordance with applicable State laws and regulations. The State Water Board also distributed for public review and comment a Finding of Emergency that complies with State laws and regulations;
18. As discussed above, the State Water Board is adopting the emergency regulation because of the continuing emergency drought conditions, the need for prompt action, and the need to act before the current emergency regulation expires on April 25, 2015; and

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19. Nothing in the regulation or in the enforcement provisions of the regulation precludes a local agency from exercising its authority to adopt more stringent conservation measures. Moreover, the Water Code does not impose a mandatory penalty for violations of the regulation adopted by this resolution, and local agencies retain the enforcement discretion in enforcing the regulation to the extent authorized. Local agencies are encouraged to develop their own progressive enforcement practices to promote conservation.

## THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT:

1. The State Water Board re-adopts California Code of Regulations, title 23, sections 863, 864, and 865, as appended to this resolution as an emergency regulation;
2. State Water Board staff will submit the regulation to the OAL for final approval;
3. If, during the approval process, State Water Board staff, the State Water Board, or OAL determines that minor corrections to the language of the regulation or supporting documentation are needed for clarity or consistency, the State Water Board Executive Director or designee may make such changes;
4. This regulation shall remain in effect for 270 days after filing with the Secretary of State unless the State Water Board determines that it is no longer necessary due to changed conditions, or unless the State Water Board renews the regulation due to continued drought conditions as described in Water Code section 1058.5;
5. The State Water Board directs staff to provide the Board with monthly updates on the implementation of the emergency regulation and its effect;
6. The State Water Board directs staff to condition funding upon compliance with the emergency regulation, to the extent feasible;
7. The State Water Board directs staff to work with the DWR and the Save Our Water campaign to disseminate information regarding the emergency regulations; and
8. The State Water Board directs staff to update the electronic reporting portal to include data fields for local agencies to report on compliance and enforcement activities.

## THEREFORE BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED THAT:

9. The State Water Board commends Californians who heeded the call for conservation and have helped to save over 119 billion gallons from August 2014 through January 2015. The State Water Board calls upon Californians to redouble their conservation efforts in the face of a fourth year of severe drought. For homeowners and businesses that have delayed removing turf, planting drought-tolerant landscapes, or installing efficient irrigation systems, the time to act is now;
10. The State Water Board calls upon water suppliers to ensure that they have adequate personnel and financial resources to implement conservation requirements not only for 2015, but also for another year of drought should it occur. Water suppliers that face budget shortfalls due to reduced sales should take immediate steps to raise necessary revenues in a way that actively promotes continued conservation. In Resolution No. 2014-0038, the State Water Board called on all urban water suppliers to evaluate

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their rate structures and begin to implement needed changes as part of planning for another dry year. These efforts should be continued and redoubled;

11. Disadvantaged communities may require assistance in increasing water conservation and State agencies should look for opportunities to provide assistance in promoting water conservation;
12. The State Water Board calls upon all water suppliers to take further actions to increase water conservation, such as by:
  - a. providing customers with timely and easy-to-understand information on the average
  - b. number of gallons they use each month and each day within their billing period; accelerating the completion of projects that will conserve potable water by making use of non-potable supplies, such as recycled water and stormwater collection projects; and
  - c. accelerating projects to fix leaks, and to conduct a system-wide water loss audit as soon as possible;
13. The State Water Board calls upon the restaurant and hospitality industry to take further actions to increase water conservation, such as by utilizing water efficient pre-rinse spray valves for dish washing and training staff on the new regulation so that the minimum amount of water is used to wash towels and linens; and
14. The State Water Board directs staff to develop a statewide portal for reporting water waste.

## CERTIFICATION

The undersigned Clerk to the Board does hereby certify that the foregoing is a full, true, and correct copy of a resolution duly and regularly adopted at a meeting of the State Water Resources Control Board held on March 17, 2015.

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Jeanine Townsend  
Clerk to the Board