



News Advisory

San Joaquin River Watershed Junior Water Rights to be Curtailed

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With California's extreme drought resulting in insufficient water to serve all water-rights holders, the State Water Resources Control Board (State Water Board) announced today that junior water-rights holders in the San Joaquin River watershed are receiving curtailment notices. The notices advise the recipients to stop diverting water from the watershed and allow it to flow to more senior water-right holders, as required by state law.

California water rights law is based on seniority. In dry years, when there isn't enough water in the system to serve all water-rights holders, those with more junior water rights may be required to stop diverting water from rivers and streams before restrictions are imposed on more senior water-right holders. Approximately 1,634 junior water-right holders in the San Joaquin River watershed will receive curtailment notices.

This action affects the remaining holders of junior "appropriative" water rights in the Sacramento-San Joaquin River watershed and Delta area not receiving the previous [May 27th notice](#). An appropriative water right is one obtained for storing water or for the use of water on land that is not directly abutting a waterway. Under the state's water-rights system of "first in time, first in right," junior water-rights holders are those with permits, licenses, registrations and certificates issued after 1914 by the State Water Board and its predecessors, also referred to as "post-1914 appropriative rights."

This curtailment affects water-rights holders in the San Joaquin River watershed, which includes many creeks and rivers draining to the river and the South Delta. The watershed includes the Stanislaus River, Tuolumne River, Merced River, and all other portions and tributaries of the San Joaquin River. A copy of the letter can be found [here](#).

A map of the watershed can be found [here](#).

The State Water Board will consider requests for continuing diversions for human health and safety purposes if there is no other source of water available to a junior diverter. Anyone seeking a case-by-case consideration for health and safety needs should contact the State Water Board with information to support such a claim.

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Water-right holders in several watersheds are developing local cooperative agreements in their respective watersheds in an effort to “share” available water and avoid curtailment. The State Water Board will consider these voluntary agreements and has advised cooperatives that the agreements must not result in injury to more senior water-right holders or unreasonably harm fish and wildlife.

Conditions in this and other watersheds continue to be monitored and curtailment notices for other watersheds may be imminent.

In April, the State Water Board launched a web page to assist water-right holders in several important watersheds to plan for possible limits on water supply availability. The web page, titled [“Watershed Analysis.”](#), details projected water supply, demand and availability for the watersheds most likely to face restrictions during the drought as demand outstrips available water supply.

A [Curtailment Fact Sheet](#) provides additional details on the curtailment process. Please visit our [curtailment notification website](#) to see what watersheds have received curtailment letters.

Governor Brown has called on all Californians to reduce their water use by 20 percent and prevent water waste – visit [SaveOurH2O.org](#) to find out how everyone can do their part, and visit [Drought.CA.Gov](#) to learn more about how California is dealing with the effects of the drought.