



Media Release

State Water Board Approves Treated Recycled Water for Agriculture and Landscape Irrigation During Drought

**For Release:
June 3, 2014**

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SACRAMENTO – The State Water Resources Control Board (State Water Board) today 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, to extend the state's precious water resources.

The general order can be used by the Regional Water Quality Control Boards (Regional Water Boards) to streamline permitting of recycled water use. Increased use of recycled water will ease the impacts of drought and increase water supply throughout the state. Recycled water is highly treated wastewater that is suitable for reuse.

"The well-managed use of recycled water by municipalities and agricultural communities for critical outdoor irrigation needs is a smart way to extend our fresh water supplies at any time, but especially so during this drought," said State Water Board Chair Felicia Marcus.

"Treatment facilities across the state do a great job producing recycled water that meets public health and environmental regulations. Recycled water can provide welcome relief to drought stricken communities. Other countries and many parts of California regularly and successfully recycle their water and have been doing so for years. This order should expedite the process of using this precious and more drought-proof resource in California."

Work on the Recycled Water Use General Order has been in progress since January and has included extensive engagement with stakeholders and discussions with the Regional Boards and the Department of Public Health who now issue individual permits for reuse on a case-by-case basis. This general order became an expedited priority following the [Governor's Jan. 17](#) drought proclamation.

The recycled water uses covered by this general order must comply with the California Department of Public Health's (CDPH) regulations for recycled water use (California Code of Regulations, Title 22), which establish minimum public health and safety standards for specified purposes of recycled water, such as irrigation.



CDPH, which is responsible for protecting public health, also establishes criteria for recycled water producers, distributors and users, including disinfection requirements and allowable uses of recycled water.

Water used under this general order is not intended to supplement drinking water supplies or recharge groundwater stores, and the order doesn't allow direct or indirect potable uses of recycled water. The order will assist farmers, industries, and municipalities, by authorizing the use of recycled water for beneficial uses such as irrigation of crops, landscape irrigation, dust control, and certain industrial processes.

In addition to improving its efficiency, the State Water Board is looking for all opportunities to increase water supplies for beneficial use while also ensuring environmental and public health protection. Studies indicate that 1.5 to 2.25 million acre feet of new water could be realized through water recycling by 2030. Recently the State Water Board acted to make available some [\\$800 million](#) in low interest loans for recycled water projects.

Recycled water is water that otherwise would be discharged to the ocean, rivers, or allowed to evaporate in holding ponds near wastewater treatment plants. Every acre-foot of recycled water use reduces demand on other water sources such as groundwater, rivers and streams, freeing up fresh water to provide drinking water and protect environmental habitat. (One acre-foot is enough water to serve 2 average households for one-year, depending on location).

Some farmers in the Central Valley have been notified that they are not likely to have access to their usual water sources this year due to the drought. The State Water Board is tracking water supplies in other parts of the state such as the north and central coasts where farmers may be restricted from diverting water due to dry conditions. This general order is a tool they could use to supplement their irrigation needs with water that has been treated to high levels and can be used in ways that the Department of Public Health has determined are protective of public health.

For more information, read this fact sheet on [recycled water use](#).

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.

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