



Media Release

State Water Board Approves Emergency Regulation to Ensure Agencies and State Residents Increase Water Conservation

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In response to the ongoing severe drought, on Tuesday the State Water Resources Control Board approved an emergency regulation to ensure water agencies, their customers and state residents increase water conservation in urban settings or face possible fines or other enforcement.

The new conservation regulation is intended to reduce outdoor urban water use. The regulation, adopted by the State Water Board, mandates minimum actions to conserve water supplies both for this year and into 2015. Most Californians use more water outdoors than indoors. In some areas, 50 percent or more of daily water use is for lawns and outdoor landscaping.

Many communities and water suppliers have taken bold steps over the years and in this year to reduce water use; however, many have not and much more can and should be done statewide to extend diminishing water supplies.

With this regulation, all Californians will be expected to stop: washing down driveways and sidewalks; watering of outdoor landscapes that cause excess runoff; using a hose to wash a motor vehicle, unless the hose is fitted with a shut-off nozzle, and using potable water in a fountain or decorative water feature, unless the water is recirculated. The regulation makes an exception for health and safety circumstances.

Larger water suppliers will be required 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 water suppliers must report water use on a monthly basis to track progress.

Local agencies could ask courts to fine water users up to \$500 a day for failure to implement conservation requirements in addition to their existing authorities and processes. The State Water Board could initiate enforcement actions against water agencies that don't comply with the new regulations. Failure to comply with a State Water Board enforcement order by water agencies is subject to up to a \$10,000 a day penalty.

"We are facing the worst drought impact that we or our grandparents have ever seen," said State Water Board Chair Felicia Marcus. "And, more important, we have no idea when it will end. This

C A L I F O R N I A E N V I R O N M E N T A L P R O T E C T I O N A G E N C Y



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drought's impacts are being felt by communities all over California. Fields are fallowed; communities are running out of water, fish and wildlife will be devastated. The least that urban Californians can do is to not waste water on outdoor uses. It is in their self-interest to conserve more, now, to avoid far more harsh restrictions, if the drought lasts into the future. These regulations are meant to spark awareness of the seriousness of the situation, and could be expanded if the drought wears on and people do not act.”

In addition to approving the emergency conservation regulation today, the State Water Board made a plea for water suppliers, communities and businesses to do even more. For example, water agencies are being asked to step up their programs to fix leaks and other sources of water loss, use more recycled water or captured stormwater, and find additional ways to incentivize demand reduction among their customers.

The new regulation was developed following two drought emergency declarations by Governor Brown. On January 17, Governor Edmund G. Brown Jr. issued a drought emergency proclamation following three dry or critically dry years in California.

The April 25 Executive Order issued by the Governor directs the State Water Board to adopt an emergency regulation as it deems necessary, pursuant to Water Code section 1058.5, to ensure that urban water suppliers implement conservation measures.

As drought conditions continue, the State Water Board may revisit this regulation and consider other measures to enhance conservation efforts throughout the state.

Following Board adoption, the regulation will likely go into effect on or about August 1, following submittal to the Office of Administrative Law. The emergency regulation remains in effect for 270 days, unless extended by the State Water Board due to ongoing drought conditions.

For more information on the proposals leading to this Board action, please visit the [Emergency Water Conservation](#) website.

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.