



# Media Release

## **PER CAPITA DAILY WATER USE NUMBERS RELEASED BY THE STATE WATER BOARD**

***STATEWIDE WATER CONSERVATION GAINS LEVELING OFF***

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Despite recent rains and cooler weather throughout much of the state, California's drought persists, and now for the first time, estimates of daily water use per person are being reported monthly for nearly every community water system statewide, providing important insight into how water systems are encouraging residents to save water.

"This new residential water use data, which is a first for the state, will inform localized conservation efforts and should start conversations in every community in California about the best and most judicious use of our precious water," said Felicia Marcus, Chair of the State Water Board. "Every gallon saved today postpones the need for more drastic, difficult, and expensive action should the drought continue into next year or beyond."

In addition, the State Water Resources Control Board (State Water Board) learned today that the statewide conservation rate leveled off in September after three months of steady improvement. Total urban water conservation was 10.3 percent in September, compared with September 2013. That was down slightly from the 11.6 percent year-over-year conservation rate for August, prompting concerns from State Water Board members. Total water use was down in September from August.

"Some rain and cooler weather are welcome relief, but they don't mean the drought is over, not by a longshot," Marcus said. "A bit of rain means we should be turning off our sprinkler systems and avoiding irrigating outdoors as much as possible while remembering to protect our trees. By far, conservation is still the most cost effective and common sense way to meet our water needs during this prolonged drought."

### **Per Capital Daily Water Use**

The new reporting requirement, called residential gallons per-capita per day (R-GPCD), presented to the State Water Board today, estimates daily water use by residential customers for nearly 400 urban water agencies statewide alongside the monthly conservation data. Both reports are a requirement of the Emergency Water Conservation Regulation adopted by the



State Water Board in July and will be provided to the Board monthly by urban water suppliers, along with total water conservation for each month. The complete report is posted [here](#).

According to the R-GPCD data, water use varies widely by hydrologic region. At the low end, the San Francisco Bay region averaged 85.2 gallons per person per day. On the high end, the Colorado River region averaged 251.9 gallons per person per day.

During a [staff presentation](#), the State Water Board was told that R-GPCD is useful for tracking water use by an urban water supplier's residential customers and can help determine whether water supplier actions, such as irrigation restrictions, rebate programs, and rate design changes, are effective.

State Water Board staff cautioned that R-GPCD data should not be used to compare water suppliers, or even hydrologic regions, unless relevant factors are taken into account. Those relevant factors include population density, population growth, temperature and evaporation rates, topography and socio-economic measures, such as lot size.

Nevertheless, communities or areas with very high R-GPCD rates should evaluate instituting additional conservation measures.

"R-GPCD really does help us to gain a better sense of comparison than simply looking at percentage reductions, since different areas of the state have been conserving for far longer than other areas. It also shows us what is possible," said Marcus. Her comments drew discussion among the Board members and direction to staff to begin planning for a water conservation workshop within the next 90 days to explore what if any additional conservation measures should be adopted if the drought continues.

## **Statewide Water Conservation for September**

Water conservation efforts leveled off in September after a steady rise since May. The water conservation rate climbed to 11.6 percent in August, a substantial increase from 7.5 percent conservation in July and 4 percent in June. But for September, the conservation rate dropped slightly to 10.3 percent. The water conservation rate is a comparison of the reporting month with the same month a year ago.

California can capitalize and make permanent conservation gains by converting thirsty landscapes to drought-tolerant landscapes which use far less water.

Compliance with the mandatory reporting requirement is steady, with 398 (96 percent) urban water suppliers, representing 35.5 million Californians, now reporting.

The report also found that in September, 87 percent of the water agencies reporting had instituted outdoor water use restrictions, a six percentage point increase from the August reporting period. Outdoor water use restrictions are a key requirement for urban water suppliers under the [Emergency Water Conservation Regulation](#) because outdoor watering accounts for as much as 80 percent of urban water use in some areas.

The total number of gallons saved since July is impressive. Approximately 18 billion gallons of water was saved in July, 27.6 billion gallons was saved in August, and 22 billion gallons was saved in September.

Collectively that's about enough water to supply a million Californians for an entire year.

## **Background**

In his Jan. 17, 2014, Emergency Drought Proclamation, Governor Brown called for Californians to voluntarily reduce their water use by 20 percent. The trend of increasing reductions and specific local data shows that many California communities have met and exceeded the call to conserve, but more can and must be done to protect water supplies should the drought persist. Current forecasts indicate that Californians cannot count upon a wet winter to alleviate the drought.

The State Water Board will closely monitor the implementation of the regulations and the weather over the coming months to determine if further restrictions are needed.

The Emergency Water Conservation Regulation will be in effect until April 25, 2015, and may be extended if drought conditions persist.

For more information visit [SaveOurWater.com](http://SaveOurWater.com) to find out how everyone can do their part, and visit [Drought.CA.Gov](http://Drought.CA.Gov) to learn more about how California is dealing with the effects of the drought.