



Media Release

State Water Board Warns That Water Right Curtailments Are Coming Soon ***Water Right Holders Will Likely See Immediate Restrictions***

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As California enters a fourth year of drought with a record-low snowpack, the State Water Resources Control Board (State Water Board) is warning that water right holders, including some senior right holders, are likely to be curtailed soon within key watersheds in the state.

The warning, to holders of more than 36,000 water rights across the state, is designed to give water right holders advance notice to help them make difficult spring planting decisions. The availability of water is a key factor in those planting decisions. The warning is the second one this year; the first was issued in [January](#).

“These are very difficult times, and everyone, urban and rural, will have to make sacrifices as we go through them,” said State Water Board Chair Felicia Marcus. “As we deal with an unprecedented drought, both urban and rural water users should anticipate we will continue to take unprecedented actions.”

Curtailment is a tool that the State Water Board uses to administer the state’s water rights system. When there is insufficient water available to meet all the demand in a watershed, water right holders, starting with the most junior, are told to stop diverting surface water to protect the rights of more senior right holders. Last summer, water rights dating back to 1914 were curtailed on most of the state’s major river systems.

If dry conditions continue through the spring, curtailments are expected in certain watersheds on all post-1914 water rights, and many holders of pre-1914 water rights may get curtailment notices as well. Riparian water right holders in some watersheds are also likely to be required to reduce their diversions and share what supplies of natural flow remains, if any.

The curtailment warning comes on the heels of stricter urban water conservation requirements and an Executive Order [announced](#) by Gov. Edmund G. Brown Jr. on Wednesday. The Governor’s Executive Order further restricts outdoor irrigation and other water uses by city dwellers. The actions are a response to another extremely dry winter and a snowpack measured this week at 6 percent of normal.

Last year curtailments affected more than 5,000 water rights, contributing to conditions that led to the fallowing of more than 400,000 acres of farmland with the corresponding loss of thousands of





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agricultural jobs - a situation that's likely to be repeated this year. While the water right curtailments predominantly affect agriculture, they also apply to water rights held by municipalities and other water users.

The timing of curtailment notices will be based on forecasts of water availability and demand. Forecasting information and estimated timing of curtailments for various classes of water right holders will be available at http://www.waterboards.ca.gov/waterrights/water_issues/programs/drought/analysis/

Further information on water rights can be found [here](#). Please visit our [Drought Year Information and Action](#) page for timely updates and information on water right actions and other important drought-related efforts.

Visit <http://saveourwater.com/> to find out how everyone can do their part, and visit <http://ca.gov/drought/> to learn more about how California is dealing with the effects of the drought.

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