



Media Release

STRONG STATEWIDE CONSERVATION EFFORT IN MARCH; WATER-SAVING HABITS AID IN 24.3 PERCENT REDUCTION

REVISIONS TO CONSERVATION REGULATION EXPECTED AT MAY 18 BOARD MEETING

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
May 3, 2016**

Contact: George Kostyrko
gkostyrko@waterboards.ca.gov

SACRAMENTO – Californians sharpened their water saving efforts in March, conserving 24.3 percent compared to the amount used in March 2013 – double February’s savings and evidence that residents and businesses remain concerned about the persistent drought now in its fifth year. Statewide cumulative savings from June 2015 to March 2016 totaled 23.9 percent compared with the same months in 2013.

“While some parts of the state saw rain and snow, other parts, specifically the Central Valley and Southern California, didn’t; and yet, all Californians stepped up again to conserve water, because they know they can and that it is good for California,” said State Water Resources Control Board Chair Felicia Marcus. “Twenty-four percent in March is a stunningly welcome number. As we head into the warmer summer months, we need to keep conserving. We may not need the same levels of conservation as last year, but we still need to keep all we can in our reservoirs and groundwater basins in case this winter is just a punctuation mark in a longer drought.”



With nearly 1.3 million acre-feet of water conserved from June 2015 through March 2016, the state continues to save an impressive amount of water. The March data show a strong start following renewed emergency water conservation regulations [adopted by the Board](#) on Feb. 2. A recent [Field Poll](#) indicates that a majority of California residents characterize the ongoing drought as “extremely serious,” with three quarters of those polled committed to ongoing water conservation.

Statewide, the conservation rate doubled from 12 percent in February to 24.3 percent in March, likely due to wetter weather and more seasonal temperatures, along with awareness that drought conditions could outlast existing water supplies.



A staff proposal that may offer revisions to the Feb. 2 emergency water conservation regulations is expected soon, following review of written and oral comments from a public workshop on [April 20](#) to receive input on conservation needs through the summer and fall. The workshop was conducted to solicit ideas for adjustments to the current emergency regulations given changes in water supply, storage, and snowpack as compared to last year's historic statewide deficiencies. This staff proposal will be considered by the Board for comment and adoption on May 18.

"It's not time yet for a drought's over party. That said, March brought us much needed rain and snow—still less than average but huge compared to the worst in 500 years, which is where we were last year," Chair Marcus said. "We've gotten a bit of a reprieve, but not a hall pass. Now we are figuring out how to appropriately adjust to a better but not ideal situation."

Until the Board acts in May, residents are urged to continue applying their water conservation skills and habits through the spring months to include complying with urban water supplier directives on when outdoor irrigation is permitted, not irrigating outdoors during and within 48 hours following a rain event, and fixing leaks that are discovered during individual water user audits.

An [updated and extended emergency regulation](#) was adopted by the Board on Feb. 2, with most revisions taking effect for the March reporting period. The regulation extends restrictions on urban water use through October while providing urban water suppliers some latitude in their conservation requirements. The action follows Governor Edmund G. Brown Jr.'s Nov. 13, 2015, [Executive Order](#) directing the State Water Board to extend the emergency water conservation regulation through Oct. 31, 2016 should drought conditions persist. Any changes made by the Board May 18, would be anticipated to take effect in June, and remain in effect through Oct. 31, 2016.

March Conservation Data

- Cumulative statewide percent reduction for June 2015 – March 2016 (ten months) is 23.9 percent, which equates to 1,295,703 acre-feet (422.2 billion gallons).
- Statewide water savings for March 2016 was 24.3 percent (107,468 acre feet or 35.0 billion gallons), more than double February 2016's 12.0 percent savings rate. See fact sheet [here](#).

Water Conservation Quick Links

[Factsheet: March by
the Numbers](#)

[June 2014 - March 2016
Data Set](#)

[Cumulative Savings and
Conservation Compliance
for March](#)

- Associated with higher monthly savings, and due to the adjustments and credits included in the extended emergency regulation, March 2016 saw an increased level of compliance with 71 percent of suppliers meeting their conservation standards
- Statewide average water use was 66 residential gallons per capita per day (R-GPCD) for March 2016, which was lower than 67 R-GPCD in February 2016 and 82.5 R-GPCD in March 2015.

Enforcement

The Office of Enforcement continues to work with suppliers that are not meeting their conservation standards. Since June 2015, the State Water Board has issued:

- 11 conservation orders,
- 120 notices of violation,
- 99 warning letters,
- Four Administrative Civil Liability Complaints (one fine paid, two stipulated orders in public comment, one in negotiations); and
- Seven alternative compliance orders.

Background

In his April 1, 2015 [Executive Order](#), Gov. Brown mandated a 25 percent water use reduction by users of urban water supplies across California. In May 2015, the State Water Board adopted an emergency regulation requiring an immediate 25 percent reduction in overall potable urban water use. The regulation uses a sliding scale for setting conservation standards, so that communities that have already reduced their R-GPCD through past conservation will have lower mandates than those that have not made such gains since the last major drought.

On Feb. 2, 2016, based on Gov. Brown's [November 2015 Executive Order](#), the State Water Board approved an updated and extended emergency regulation that will continue mandatory reductions through October, unless revised before then. The extended regulation responds to calls for continuing the conservation structure that has spurred such dramatic savings so far while providing greater consideration of some factors that influence water use: climate, population growth and significant investments in new local, drought-resilient water supplies such as wastewater reuse and desalination. Under the extended regulation, statewide water conservation is expected to continue at the high levels Californians have been achieving since June 2015.



Media Release

The State Water Board tracks water conservation for each of the state's larger urban water suppliers (those with more than 3,000 connections) on a monthly basis, but compliance with individual water supplier conservation requirements is based on cumulative savings. Cumulative tracking means that conservation savings will be added together from one month to the next and compared to the amount of water used during the same months in 2013.

California has been dealing with the effects of an unprecedented drought. To learn about all the actions the state has taken to manage our water system and cope with the impacts of the drought, visit Drought.CA.Gov. Every Californian should take steps to conserve water. Find out how at SaveOurWater.com. While saving water, it is important to properly water trees. Find out how at www.saveourwater.com/trees. In addition to many effective local programs, state-funded turf removal and toilet replacement rebates are also available. Information and rebate applications can be found at: www.saveourwaterrebates.com/.

###

