



# Media Release

## Statewide Water Savings Top 18 Percent in September; Conservation Still Needed Despite Early Rains

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**SACRAMENTO** — The State Water Resources Control Board today announced that urban Californians' monthly water conservation was 18.3 percent in September, up from 17.5 percent in August but below the 26.2 percent savings in September 2015, when state-mandated conservation targets were in place. The State Water Board stressed the need for continued conservation as California heads into a possible sixth drought year.

The cumulative statewide savings from June 2015 through September 2016 was 23 percent, compared with the same months in 2013. Since June 2015, 2.15 million acre-feet of water has been saved — enough water to supply more than 10 million people, or more than one-quarter the state's 38 million population, for a year.

Although October storms in Northern California provided an encouraging start to the 2016-2017 water year (Oct. 1, 2016 – Sept. 30, 2017), planning for the possibility of another dry winter is essential. The State Water Board will continue to monitor conservation levels and water supply conditions, and staff will develop a proposal for extended emergency conservation regulations in January 2017. The proposal may include a return to state-mandated conservation if dry conditions prevail.

"I am glad to see the slide stop, and even reverse a bit overall, especially as we move into traditionally lower water-use months when we would expect percentages to drop significantly," said State Water Board Chair Felicia Marcus. "Overall, we're happy to see millions of Californians and many water agencies continue significant conservation. Conversely, we're concerned to see some agencies return to using hundreds of gallons per person per day while saving little. Whether it's because we know we don't know what the weather will bring this season, or because it is just the smart thing to do, we need to keep conserving."



“The early rains are very welcome, and we’ll take every drop we can safely handle. But just because we’re ahead in the early innings doesn’t mean that we’ve won the game,” Chair Marcus said. “Considering that the majority of precipitation typically occurs between January and April in any given water year, we have a long way to go before we know whether we’ll make another significant dent in the drought.”

## Conservation Data

- Statewide water savings for September 2016 was 18.3 percent (116,703 acre feet or 38.0 billion gallons), an increase from August 2016’s 17.5 percent savings, but a decrease from September 2015’s 26.2 percent statewide savings (55.9 billion gallons). September 2016 water savings are 32 percent lower than September 2015.
- Cumulative statewide water savings for June 2015 to September 2016 (sixteen months) was 23.0 percent, compared with the same months in 2013. That equates to 2,145,241 acre-feet (699 billion gallons).
- Statewide average per person water use for September 2016 was 105.9 residential gallons per capita per day (R-GPCD), below the 113.7 R-GPCD in August 2016 but above 96.9 R-GPCD reported for September 2015. See the September [fact sheet](#) for more information, and see [all the September data on the Conservation Reporting page](#).

Conservation levels have remained significant for many communities that had certified that they did not need state-imposed mandates to keep conserving.

Under the board’s revised [emergency water conservation regulations](#), urban water agencies have the ability to identify their own conservation standards based on a “stress test” of supply reliability. Water suppliers had to document that they have sufficient supplies to withstand three years of continuous drought or take additional measures that include state-imposed mandatory conservation standards. The regulation is in effect through January 2017. Those stress test results are [here](#).

In September, more than a third of the suppliers that passed their stress test achieved conservation savings above 20 percent. These 132 suppliers serve more than nine million people, and include Sacramento, California Water Service Company Bakersfield, Otay Water District, San Gabriel Valley Fontana Water Company, Cucamonga Valley Water District, Contra Costa Water District, Sweetwater Authority, Suburban Water Systems San Jose Hills, Garden Grove, Santa Margarita Water District, and Pomona.

Additionally, many water suppliers showed September 2016 conservation levels above September 2015 levels, including California Water Service Company King City, Wasco,

Westborough Water District, Santa Barbara, Blythe, La Habra, Goleta Water District, Coalinga, and Benicia.

### **Conservation Plunges for Some Suppliers**

However, not all suppliers are sustaining significant conservation. State Water Board staff continues to look at why conservation levels have dropped in these communities, and is particularly concerned about suppliers with extremely high levels of per-capita water use. Suppliers with high R-GPCD levels and sharp reductions in conservation include: San Juan Water District, Vaughn Water Company, Myoma Dunes Mutual Water Company, Valley Water Company, Folsom, and LA County Waterworks District 29 (Malibu).

One question for the Board is whether these suppliers need assistance to comply with SB 814 (Hill), which takes effect Jan. 1, 2017. The new law requires urban water suppliers to establish financial penalties for excess water use during droughts. Suppliers can either create excess-use ordinances with defined penalty amounts, or they can adopt rate structures that charge their highest users more during drought emergencies.

Some communities continue to maintain low overall per capita residential water use, which may not be reflected in percentage change, but illustrates a long-term commitment to efficient water use.

For instance, Eureka, City of Big Bear Lake, Estero Municipal Improvement District, Arcata, Daly City, South Gate, Paramount, and McKinleyville Community Service District are examples of communities saving less than 10 percent in September 2016, yet the daily per capita use is already well below what a city in the Sacramento Region may be using on a daily basis. For agency data on water savings and average daily use, visit [here](#).

### **Status of Permanent Water Use Efficiency Targets Effort**

The current conservation regulation, adopted in May, is part of a wider effort to build on short-term, emergency water restrictions to establish permanent conservation measures that improve long-term drought preparedness and eliminate the worst water-wasting practices. These actions will help achieve a top priority of the state's Water Action Plan - to "Make Conservation a California Way of Life."

In May, Governor Edmund G. Brown Jr. issued an [executive order](#) calling for new permanent water use efficiency targets for each urban water supplier and for strengthening local Water Shortage Contingency Plans. The local "stress test" data and three-year resiliency plans collected by the State Water Board will serve as a bridge to these actions and inform the development of new water use efficiency targets.

The [Board continues to work with state partner](#) agencies to craft a long term framework to meet Governor Edmund G. Brown Jr.'s [executive order](#) calling for new water use efficiency targets, permanent prohibitions on water waste, and improved drought planning. The Governor's Executive Order calls on state agencies, including the State Water Board, Department of Water Resources, California Public Utilities Commission, Department of Food and Agriculture, and the California Energy Commission to transition to permanent, long-term improvements in water use. The Department of Water Resources and State Water Board are directed to develop new water use targets as part of a permanent framework for urban water agencies.

Those new targets build upon existing state law, and will be based on strengthened standards for indoor water use; outdoor irrigation; commercial, industrial, and institutional use; and water lost through leaks. The state agencies are preparing a report, due Jan. 10, 2017, that will detail the proposed framework, new standards, and implementation timeline. Information about the Executive Order can be found [here](#).

Prohibitions also remain against homeowners associations or local governments taking action against homeowners who reduce or stop watering lawns. As directed by the executive order, the State Water Board will be making these prohibitions permanent.

## Background

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](http://Drought.CA.Gov). Every Californian should take steps to conserve water. Find out how at [SaveOurWater.com](http://SaveOurWater.com). While saving water, it is important to properly water trees. Find out how at [www.saveourwater.com/trees](http://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/](http://www.saveourwaterrebates.com/).

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