



Media Release

Statewide Water Savings Nearly Reach 19 Percent in November; Most of State Still Experiencing Drought Conditions

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
Jan. 4, 2017

Contact: George Kostyrko
george.kostyrko@waterboards.ca.gov

SACRAMENTO — The State Water Resources Control Board today announced that urban Californians' monthly water conservation was 18.8 percent in November, a decrease from 19.6 percent in October and below the 20.2 percent savings in November 2015, when state-mandated conservation targets were in place. The State Water Board stressed the need for continued conservation given that Central and Southern California remain in drought conditions and the statewide snowpack is below average despite recent storms.



The cumulative statewide savings from June 2015 through November 2016 remains at 22.6 percent, compared with the same months in 2013. Since June 2015, 2.35 million acre-feet of water has been saved — enough water to supply more than 11 million people, or more than one-quarter the state's population, for a year.

Although October through December rains in Northern California provided an encouraging start to the 2016-2017 water year (Oct. 1, 2016 – Sept. 30, 2017), much of the state has not recovered from the severe drought conditions that have persisted for the past four years. Moreover, measurements by the Department of Water Resources indicate that the statewide snowpack is [about 70 percent of average for early January](#).

The State Water Board will continue to monitor conservation levels and water supply conditions, and will present a staff proposal to extend emergency conservation regulations for public discussion on Jan. 18. The proposal may include a return to state-mandated conservation targets if dry conditions return or if conservation levels slip significantly. The Board won't be acting on the staff proposals on Jan. 18; staff will be bringing a proposal to the Board for consideration in February after taking into account comments from the Jan. 18 public workshop.



“Californians are continuing to conserve, which is the way it should be, given that we can’t know what the future will bring but we know that we can’t take water for granted anymore,” said State Water Board Chair Felicia Marcus. “It was especially good to see another month of impressive increases in conservation in northern California.

“With climate change already creating water supply challenges that will only get worse and State population projected to exceed 40 million by 2020, we all need to become more efficient with our limited water supplies year in and year out. Increased water efficiency coupled with new storage, recycling, stormwater capture and other measures is going to make us more resilient over the long term,” said Marcus.

Conservation Data

- Statewide water savings for November 2016 was 18.8 percent (86,793 acre feet or 28.3 billion gallons), a decrease from October 2016’s 19.6 percent savings, and a decrease from November 2015’s 20.2 percent statewide savings (30.9 billion gallons). November 2016 water savings are nine percent lower than November 2015 savings.
- Cumulative statewide percent reduction for June 2015 – November 2016 (18months) is 22.6 percent, which equates to 2,347,125 acre-feet (764.8 billion gallons).
- Statewide average residential gallons per capita per day (R-GPCD) for November 2016 was 76.6 gallons, below the 89.8 R-GPCD in October 2016 and slightly above 75.6 R-GPCD reported for November 2015. Link to Fact sheet [here](#). [All November data can be found on this 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 February 2017. Those stress test results are [here](#).

In November 2016, 44 percent of suppliers achieved water savings above 20 percent. These 174 suppliers serve more than 13 million people and include the East Bay Municipal Utilities District, San Jose Water Company, Sacramento, Alameda County Water District, Coachella Valley Water District, Modesto, Los Angeles County Public Works Waterworks District 40

(Antelope Valley), California-American Water Company Sacramento District, and Contra Costa Water District, among others.

Additionally, many water suppliers showed November 2016 conservation levels that were even higher than November 2015 levels, including Lemoore, Patterson, Whittier, Goleta Water District, and Sonoma.

In looking at the data, percentage savings alone do not tell a complete story of conservation achievement. Suppliers with already low R-GPCD use are taking more significant efforts to save water with small percentage reductions. That is compared to big users of water for whom it is easier to save water, particularly on outdoor ornamental landscapes. Despite less than 10 percent water savings in November 2016, examples of communities with low R-GPCD and already significant conservation and efficiency achievements include San Diego, Irvine Ranch Water District, Sweetwater Authority, Park Water Company, California-American Water Company San Diego District, Compton, Golden State Water Company (Florence Graham), Paramount, Estero Municipal Improvement District, and Eureka.

However, not all suppliers are sustaining significant conservation. State Water Board staff continues to look at why conservation levels have dropped in such 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: Santa Fe Irrigation District, Los Angeles County Public Works Waterworks District 29 (Malibu), Vaughn Water Company, and Valley Water Company.

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.

Status of Permanent Water Use Efficiency Targets

The current conservation regulation, adopted in May 2016, is part of a wider effort to build on short-term, emergency water restrictions, establish permanent conservation measures and eliminate the worst water-wasting practices. These actions will help achieve a top priority of the state's Water Action Plan - to improve long-term drought preparedness and "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 that reflect California's diverse climate, landscape, and demographic conditions. 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.

On Nov. 30, the State Water Board along with four other state agencies released a [draft framework](#) for implementing the executive order. The new plan's fundamental premise is that efficient water use helps all of California better prepare for longer and more severe droughts caused by climate change.

The framework develops long-term water conservation measures that will ensure all communities have sufficient water supplies. This will involve activities such as permanently prohibiting wasteful practices like hosing off sidewalks and driveways and ensuring farmers plan and prepare for severe drought. A final report with recommendations will be released in early 2017.

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. 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/.

###