



Media Release

Statewide Water Conservation Grows to 28 Percent in May; Urban Water Suppliers 'Stress Test' Data Under Review

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SACRAMENTO – The State Water Resources Control Board announced today that Californians reduced residential water use by 28 percent in May, compared with the same month in 2013. Cumulatively, local water suppliers have saved 1.6 million acre feet in the 12 months since mandatory conservation goals began – enough water to supply eight million people for a year.

“The phenomenal ongoing water conservation by state residents as we enter the hottest summer months clearly shows Californians understand we remain in stubborn drought conditions statewide and that saving water is just the smart thing to do,” said State Water Board Chair Felicia Marcus.

“Rain or shine, drought or no drought, state mandated target or not, Californians should keep conserving. While conditions improved for urban California’s water supply with the rain and snow we got last year, we are still largely in drought and saving water can extend urban water supplies off into the future if this next winter is dry again.”

Although new regulations taking effect in June give local water suppliers more autonomy to set their own conservation goals based on local supply conditions, the State Water Board said it expects suppliers to continue to make water conservation a top priority as California enters the summer months, when the opportunity for water savings is greatest.

Despite near average rainfall in much of Northern California this past winter, 60 percent of the state remains in severe or extreme drought. Groundwater basins and many reservoirs are badly depleted as the state’s drought grinds into a fifth year.

May Conservation Data

- Statewide water savings for May 2016 was 28.2 percent (176,947 acre feet or 57.7 billion gallons), an increase from April 2016’s savings of 26.1 percent. See fact sheet [here](#).



- Cumulatively, the statewide percent reduction for the twelve months from June 2015 to May 2016 was 24.5 percent, which equates to 1,609,532 acre-feet (524.5 billion gallons).
- The level of compliance also increased in May 2016, with 72 percent of suppliers meeting or within one percentage point of their conservation standards and 16 percent within five percentage points of the conservation standard.
- Statewide, average per capita water use (residential gallons per capita per day, or R-GPCD) for May 2016 was 86.8 gallons; up from 77 R-GPCD in April 2016 but below 87.6 R-GPCD reported for May 2015. [All May data can be found on this page.](#)

Revised Emergency Regulations

Starting in June, the State Water Board's recently updated [emergency water conservation regulations](#) give urban water agencies the ability to set their own conservation standards based on a "stress test" of supply reliability. Water suppliers must demonstrate that they have sufficient supplies to withstand three years of continuous drought or take additional measures that include mandatory conservation targets. The regulation is in effect through January 2017.

The deadline to submit the "stress test" results and three-year resiliency plans was June 22. While most urban water suppliers and wholesale water providers have submitted materials, the State Water Board staff is following up with a number of suppliers whose submissions appear incomplete or unclear. Once all of the submissions have been received and are complete, the State Water Board will make them publicly available.

While water suppliers may calculate lower conservation targets, the State Water Board expects that they will continue to promote and achieve water conservation and enforce prohibitions on wasting water first enacted in July 2014. Moreover, the Board is prepared to come back in early 2017 to develop new mandatory water restrictions if needed.

Permanent Ban on Wasting Water

The recently adopted regulation 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 State Water Board regulation also continues the statewide ban on specific wasteful uses, such as hosing off sidewalks, driveways and other hardscapes; washing cars with hoses not equipped with a shut-off nozzle; and watering lawns in a manner that causes runoff. Prohibitions also remain against homeowners associations or local governments taking action against homeowners who reduce or stop watering lawns.

Background

In his April 1, 2015 [Executive Order](#), Gov. Edmund G. Brown Jr. 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 a 25 percent reduction in overall potable urban water use statewide from June 2015 through February 2016.

On Feb. 2, 2016, based on Gov. Brown's [November 2015 Executive Order](#), the State Water Board approved an updated and extended emergency regulation. The extended regulation responded to calls for continuing the conservation structure that had spurred such dramatic savings 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.

On May 9, 2016, Governor Edmund G. Brown Jr. issued [Executive Order B-37-16](#), requiring the Board to adjust its emergency water conservation regulation through the end of January 2017 in recognition of the differing water supply conditions across the state and, separately, take action to make some of the requirements of the regulation permanent. The Board [adopted the revised regulation](#) on May 18.

Since June 2014, the State Water Board has been tracking water conservation for each of the state's larger urban water suppliers (those with more than 3,000 connections) on a monthly basis. 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/](#).

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