



# Media Release

## STATE WATER BOARD STRESSES NEED TO CONTINUE WATER SAVINGS AS DROUGHT PERSISTS

***CALIFORNIANS RAMP UP WATER CONSERVATION TO 26.1 PERCENT IN APRIL***

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
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**Contact:** George Kostyrko  
[george.kostyrko@waterboards.ca.gov](mailto:george.kostyrko@waterboards.ca.gov)

**SACRAMENTO** – The State Water Resources Control Board today applauded a high-level of water conservation in April—a 26.1 percent reduction over 2013 usage—but reminded urban water suppliers that they must continue to make water conservation a top priority amidst ongoing drought conditions across California.

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

“Californians continue to demonstrate that they are serious about water conservation, which is fabulous,” said State Water Board Chair Felicia Marcus. “We will be watching closely to make sure that water agencies continue to prioritize the conservation habits their customers have adopted, and don’t fall back into business as usual. In particular we expect them to continue to enforce bans on the worst types of wasteful water use, and to take a prudent approach with their water budgets.”



The newly adjusted State Water Board regulation places responsibility on each local water supplier to calculate its own conservation standards for customers based on a “stress test,” which requires them to prove they have sufficient water supplies to withstand three years of continuous drought, or take additional measures that include mandatory conservation targets. Water suppliers that fail to meet these new conservation standards may still face enforcement from the State Water Board.

While water agencies may calculate lower conservation targets for the next nine months, the State Water Board expects that they will continue to achieve water conservation with their customers regardless of local supply situations.



The recently adopted regulation also continues the statewide ban on specific wasteful uses, such as hosing off sidewalks, driveways and other hardscapes, and watering lawns in a manner that causes runoff. Prohibitions remain as well against home owners associations or local governments taking action against homeowners who reduce or stop watering lawns.

Additionally, last month Governor Edmund G. Brown Jr. issued an [executive order](#) calling for new permanent water use targets for each urban water supplier and concrete improvements to local agencies' drought preparedness.

Including the results for April, Californians have saved more than 1.43 million acre-feet of water since June 2015, a 24.1 percent reduction in water use compared to the same months in 2013. Water saved during the 11 month period was enough to supply 7.2 million Californians for one year, or 18 percent of the state's population.

Continued conservation is especially critical during the hot summer months, when the potential for water savings is greatest.

"Summer is when we use far more water than we need to," Chair Marcus said. "Keeping our lawns on a water diet is the easiest way to save every valuable drop we can in our local reservoirs and groundwater basins for the future. Californians most need to keep up their impressive conservation in the summer months—wherever they are in the state. The fact is that we could be staring down the barrel of continued drought into 2017 and last winter's rain and snow could just be a punctuation mark in a longer drought."

Under the new "stress test" approach adopted by the State Water Board last month, local water agencies are required to publicly disclose the projections and calculations used to determine their conservation standards, and to continue their monthly water conservation reporting. The localized "stress test" approach took effect June 1, with each agency expected to identify its conservation standard no later than June 22. The "stress-test" conservation standards will be in effect through January 2017.

"While El Nino didn't bring the record precipitation predicted, it did help many communities. But we don't know what next year will bring, so we need to keep conserving. We are trying a different approach, replacing a top-down requirement with a 'show us the water' approach that requires urban water suppliers show us, their consumers, and the public exactly what water supplies they are relying on, in concert with conservation, to be water secure for at least three more dry years on top of the four tough years we've already seen," Chair Marcus said.

### *Water Conservation Quick Links*

[Factsheet: April by  
the Numbers](#)

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

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

“While we’re relieved at the snow and rainfall some areas of the state got this winter and have adjusted our approach accordingly, we will be looking carefully at the data that comes in on water sources and on conservation rates and will be prepared to raise questions and to step back to a top-down requirement if necessary, in individual cases or overall. Conservation must become a California way of life—it’s just the smart thing to do with a precious resource.”

## April Conservation Data

- Cumulative statewide percent reduction for June 2015 to April 2016 (eleven months) was 24.1 percent, which equates to 1,431,101 acre-feet (466.3 billion gallons).
- Statewide water savings for April 2016 was 26.1 percent (134,171 acre-feet or 43.7 billion gallons), an increase from March 2016’s 24.3 percent savings. See fact sheet [here](#).
- Associated with higher monthly savings, and due to the adjustments and credit included in the extended emergency regulation, April 2016 continued with an increased level of compliance; 71 percent of suppliers met or were within one percent point of their conservation standards.
- Even with the February 2016 credits and adjustments adopted by the Board to address equity concerns raised by suppliers and customers, conservation levels have remained high, even increasing from March to April.
- Statewide average water use was 77 residential gallons per capita per day (R-GPCD) for April 2016, up from 66 R-GPCD in March 2016 but below 90 R-GPCD reported for April 2015.

## 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 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 per-capita use through past conservation 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. The extended regulation responded 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.

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. Under the new reporting structure, water districts will continue to [report water use](#), but their conservation standard will be based on any shortfall in projected supply after three drought years.

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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