



# Media Release

## Statewide Water Conservation Steady at 20 Percent in July *Water Board Focuses on Local, Regional Results to Review Performance*

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
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**SACRAMENTO** —The State Water Resources Control Board today announced that urban Californians' water conservation remained steady at 20 percent in July, just one percentage point below June's savings of 21 percent. The July results come even after the state relaxed conservation requirements in recognition of improved water supply conditions.

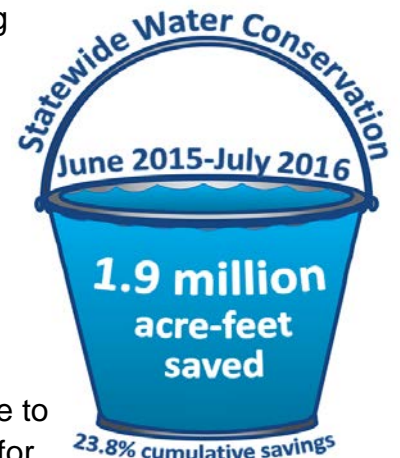
The cumulative average savings from June 2015 through July 2016 was 23.8 percent compared with the same months in 2013 – evidence that statewide focus on urban water conservation can change habits as long as water suppliers continue their ongoing education and dialogue with customers on the importance of conserving and using water as efficiently as possible.

The Board continues to work with state partners to craft a long term strategy 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. Information about the Executive Order can be found at:

<http://www.water.ca.gov/wateruseefficiency/conservation/>

“The statewide July conservation results show that Californians continue to care about their communities and preserving precious water resources for the longer term,” said State Water Board Chair Felicia Marcus. “While Californians have maintained their conservation awareness and practices without top-down mandates, we are watching trends in parts of California that suggest some areas may be easing up more than the improved conditions may warrant, while other areas are continuing to conserve for the long term.”

Virtually all agencies continued to save water in July, even those that no longer face a state-mandated reduction. Under the board's revised regulations, water agencies that passed a “stress test” of supply reliability – by demonstrating that they have sufficient supplies to withstand three years of continuous drought — will not face a mandatory percentage reduction through January 2017 but are expected to keep conserving water. The July results varied



across the state, with some agencies saving a bit less than they did under state-mandated targets, others saving a lot less, and yet others saving more than they had in 2015.

Some agencies that had saved 20 percent or more in 2015 dropped to less than 10 percent savings in 2016, such as Anaheim, Malibu (Los Angeles County Public Works Waterworks District 29), Vallejo and Yucaipa Valley Water District. Additional suppliers with large decreases in conservation included the City of Bakersfield and San Juan Water District (suburban Sacramento area).

Other agencies maintained strong conservation despite passing their “stress test,” including Sacramento, Beverly Hills, Fresno, San Luis Obispo, Park Water Company (LA County), San Jose, San Francisco, and Contra Costa Water District. Some agencies even increased their level of conservation, such as Menlo Park, South San Francisco (California Water Company), Santa Fe Springs, Santa Barbara, Benicia, Hayward, Alhambra, Marina Coast Water District, Salinas and King City (California Water Service Company). A complete list of water supplier results for July is [here](#).

#### Focus on Local and Regional Results

As a region, Southern California saw a bigger drop in overall conservation levels relative to 2015 than some other large regions – from 28.2 percent in July 2015 to 16.9 percent in July 2016. However, Southern California communities varied widely in their ongoing conservation, with some communities meeting or exceeding their 2015 conservation levels, and per capita water use remains low in many areas.

Still, the State Water Board will continue to monitor conservation and usage levels at the local and regional scale. Even for water suppliers that passed their “stress test,” ongoing conservation is important to build drought resilience.

“Having invested time and effort into conservation, many Californians and their communities continue to hit it out of the park,” Chair Marcus said. “Others are still very much in the game, while a few communities seem to be leaving the ballpark entirely. We’ll keep looking closely at the monthly results to determine if we need to step back in with demand-based or other higher conservation standards. But for now Californians have continued to conserve, albeit at a lesser level, having stepped up mightily last year in the face of extreme conditions.”

Water suppliers that passed their “stress test” do not face a state-mandated reduction target through January 2017. While some local water suppliers may have relaxed water use restrictions from those that were in place last summer, the statewide prohibition on specific wasteful practices, such as fountains without recirculating pumps, or irrigation of turf in street medians, remain in place. And most agencies have kept up locally mandated restrictions and targets, which is appropriate and which the state strongly encourages.

“Last year, facing the fourth year of an historic drought and the worst snowpack in 500 years, we were at red alert,” said Marcus. “This year, with some drought relief from one season of near normal rain and snow, we’re still at yellow alert; we are definitely not at all-clear. We’re at yellow alert in the short run in case we go right back to dry years, and we are at yellow alert in the longer run because we know we’ll have more and more dry years with climate change, so we need to use water as the precious resource that it is. It’s the most sensible and cost-effective thing Californians can do.”

### July Conservation Data

- Statewide water savings for July 2016 was 20 percent (145,311 acre feet or 47.3 billion gallons), a decrease from June 2016’s 21.5 percent savings, and down from July 2015’s 31.3 percent statewide savings (74.9 billion gallons).
- Cumulative statewide percent reduction for June 2015 to July 2016 (14 months) is 23.8 percent, which equates to 1,899,336 acre-feet (618.9 billion gallons).
- The cumulative water savings of 1.9 million acre feet is enough to supply more than 9.5 million people for a year.
- Statewide average residential gallons per person per day (R-GPCD )for July 2016 was 113.5 gallons; up from 105.2 R-GPCD in June 2016 and above the 98.1 R-GPCD reported for July 2015, but well below the 142 R-GPCD in July 2013. [All July data can be found on this page.](#)

### Revised Emergency Regulations

Starting in June, the State Water Board’s [emergency water conservation regulations](#) gave urban water agencies the ability to set their own conservation standards based on a “stress test” of supply reliability. Participating 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 targets. The regulation is in effect through January 2017. Those stress test results are [here](#).

While water suppliers can calculate lower conservation targets for purposes of state enforcement, the State Water Board expects that they will continue to promote and achieve water conservation at the local level and enforce prohibitions on wasting water first enacted in July 2014. The Board’s expectation is that all water suppliers will continue encouraging their customers to conserve, even if they pass their “stress test.” The Board is prepared to come back in early 2017 to reimpose higher 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. As directed by the executive order, the State Water Board will be making these prohibitions permanent.

## Background

In his April 1, 2015 [Executive Order](#), in light of three unusually dry years, including the worst snowpack in 500 years, 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 compared with 2013. The board implemented tiered conservation requirements, ranging from 8 percent to 32 percent, so that areas that had reduced their per capita water use over the years had lower targets than those areas using more water per person.

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 improved urban 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. June was the first month under the revised regulation.

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](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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