



April 13, 2016

Ms. Jeanine Townsend
Clerk to the State Water Board
State Water Resource Control Board
1001 I Street, 24th Floor
Sacramento, California 95814
Via electronic mail: commentletters@waterboards.ca.gov



Re: 4/20/16 Urban Water Conservation Public Workshop

Dear Ms. Townsend:

We wanted to reiterate comments made earlier in the year with regard to proposed modifications to the current emergency water urban conservation regulations. The modest adjustments to the May 2015 Emergency Regulations are appreciated but we are writing to request consideration of additional modifications based on the unique circumstances of Imperial County and its urban water suppliers (the cities of Brawley, Calexico, El Centro, and Imperial). Imperial County, the southernmost county in California, is distinctive in climate, socio-economic demographics and water availability.

Regarding climatic considerations, we applaud the climate adjustment language in the revised regulations. The Climate Adjustment provision allowing for a maximum four percent reduction in community conservation targets is a good start. However, we live in a hot, lower desert climate zone with an average rainfall of under three inches per year. Imperial Valley temperatures routinely exceed 100 degrees for several months of the year.

While our communities are struggling to meet the demand reduction targets set by the board, it is at the permanent cost of the loss of established lawns and permanent landscape. Children and adults in our region are diagnosed with asthma far in excess of the state average. The loss of grass and landscaping exasperates asthma and other respiratory conditions caused by the increased particulate matter in our air.

In addition, to meet the statewide 25 percent demand reduction goals, communities are reducing landscape watering to such a degree we are losing trees. For years, our residents were encouraged to plant trees to shade houses in order to reduce energy usage in hot summer months where temperatures average 103.5 degrees between June - September. Trees provide essential shade year round and the water cost to replant this scarce resource will far exceed that conserved in drought conditions.

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We also can appreciate the extension and modification of the Commercial Agriculture Exclusion and the introduction of the New Local Drought-Resilient Supply Credit. With regard to the credit, we ask that the board consider giving our region credit for extraordinary valley-wide conservation efforts. The proposed credit, as it stands, serves only to benefit the recipient or end user of those supplies, and similar consideration should be granted to the communities that have the more arduous and complex task of generating these drought-resilient supplies from their conservation and transfer programs. From 2014-2015, our region conserved over 1 million acre feet or 326,000,000,000 gallons of water through Imperial Irrigation District conservation programs. This conserved water was delivered to urban Southern California communities to provide water supply reliability and drought resilience due to IID's senior present perfected water rights. The Board should recognize these conservation achievements and provide a modest four percent drought-resilient supply credit to our region which is collectively responsible for ensuring California does not exceed its 4.4 million acre-feet annual entitlement by assisting its urban neighbors through these massive conservation programs.

Finally, we wish to echo a request outlined in a December 2, 2015 letter from Tina Shields representing IID (attached) regarding a Disadvantaged Communities Adjustment. Our cities are responding to the emergency regulations with extremely limited resources. All but one of the seven cities in Imperial County are classified as disadvantaged communities. Our cities should not be asked to compromise other services by redirected limited resources to extraordinary conservation regulations. We ask that the Board consider a cap on conservation targets of 15 percent for these communities.

The Imperial Valley uses 100 percent locally sourced water-diverted from the Colorado River. Being an isolated, rural desert community, all of our agricultural business and municipal and industrial users are aware of this precious and limited resource and always do their best to use their supplies efficiently. We ask that the Board recognize the unique conditions and circumstances of the region and consider additional modifications to conservation credits and targets for the cities of Brawley, Calexico, El Centro, and Imperial.

Again, we applaud the State Board for the proposed changes in the statewide reductions and ask that additional consideration be given to our region.

Sincerely,



Lawrence Cox
President
Imperial County Farm Bureau



Jack Vessey
Chairman
Imperial Valley Water
(IVH2O)

Attachment



December 2, 2015

Ms. Jeanine Townsend
Clerk of the Board
State Water Resources Control Board
1001 I Street, 24th Floor
Sacramento, California 95814
Via electronic mail: commentletters@waterboards.ca.gov

Re: Comment Letter – Urban Water Conservation Workshop

Dear Ms. Townsend:

Imperial Irrigation District is pleased to be able to offer these comments on the Notice of Public Workshop for Urban Water Conservation dated November 6, 2015. In the interest of avoiding duplicative comments, IID supports and incorporates by reference the comments submitted to the State Water Resources Control Board on November 30, 2015, by the Association of California Water Agencies.

IID has the following additional comments for consideration by the SWRCB:

1. *Urban Regulations Only.* IID believes it is vitally important for the SWRCB to recognize that there are fundamental differences between urban water suppliers and agricultural water suppliers, even when, as is the case with IID, an agricultural water supplier also provides water to urban areas located within its boundaries. It is for this reason that IID strongly supports continuing to limit these emergency water conservation measures to potable water suppliers.

2. *Climate Adjustment.* As noted in the ACWA comments, there is a need to adjust the urban water conservation regulations to reflect the very real differences in climate among the different portions of California. The urban areas within IID – including the cities of Brawley, Calexico, El Centro and Imperial – are located in one of the hottest and driest portions of southern California. Water use in these areas to maintain outdoor vegetation and supply residential, commercial and industrial uses inevitably will be greater than water use for the exact same purpose in coastal areas. We believe that ACWA's proposal for climate adjustment strikes the appropriate balance between ensuring that all parts of California "do their part" and not penalizing those who live and work in desert regions such as the Imperial Valley.

3. *Disadvantaged Communities Adjustment.* Water agencies across California have borne very large financial costs to respond to the current drought. In the Imperial Valley, cities are trying to implement the emergency regulations with extremely limited resources. All but one of the seven cities in Imperial Valley that IID provides raw water to are classified as disadvantaged communities; per capita income in Imperial County is only about 56 percent of the statewide average, nearly a quarter of the population is classified as below poverty level and local unemployment levels are almost always the highest in the state (approaching 24 percent in September 2015, which was an improvement from 2014). When confronted with a choice between spending limited funds to implement demand reduction programs, initiate enforcement actions, or provide for community priorities such as adequate fire and police protection or improvements to outdated essential infrastructure projects, city councils will naturally choose to protect health and human safety. Accordingly, IID proposes that the SWRCB include an adjustment for disadvantaged communities within the new regulations. Specifically, we suggest that water conservation requirements in those communities be capped at a reduction of no more than 15 percent from 2013 levels. We believe that this conservation requirement would ensure that disadvantaged communities (like those in Imperial County) will contribute to the statewide conservation goal in a manner that will not drain their already-strained financial resources.

4. *Sustainable Supplies Adjustment.* As the SWRCB is well aware, IID is partnering with the San Diego County Water Authority, Coachella Valley Water District, and the Metropolitan Water District of Southern California in a series of large-scale, agriculture-to-urban water transfers from the Imperial Valley under the auspices of the Quantification Settlement Agreement (QSA). These programs focus on the more complex but effective efficiency-based conservation rather than demand reduction measures. Real conservation is critical not only to the California Colorado River 4.4 Plan, but it also ensures water supply resilience and reliability to southern California, particularly during a statewide drought. A November 21, 2015 San Diego *Union-Tribune* article reported that these conserved water transfers have provided a more than ample supply of water for some of these urban areas, and have done so in a mutually agreed upon format. Indeed, forced cutbacks to certain QSA parties could in fact prove counter-productive due to longstanding Colorado River water rights, existing agreements and ongoing drought planning discussions that could complicate existing Colorado River operational policies and programs. Thus, a region's unique water supply circumstances and water rights should be considered and provide a basis for reductions in a public water system's conservation requirement regardless of the supply being imported or local, with credits given to areas that are already invested in existing long-term conservation and transfer programs and that are proactively managing their supplies. Similarly, long-term water supply certainty may not reside in traditional storage reservoirs but instead be based on annual diversion obligations, long-term

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contractual agreements and/or present perfected water rights and priorities, and similarly should provide a basis for conservation reductions.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the emergency regulations. Please contact me (760) 339-9038 or tlshields@iid.com if you have questions.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Tina Shields". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Tina Anderholt Shields, PE
Water Manager