



Fact Sheet

Questions and Answers on the State Water Board's Role to Improve Water Efficiency and Make Conservation a Way of Life

Governor Edmund G. Brown Jr.'s [April 7 action](#) to rescind the [January 17, 2014](#), drought declaration sets into motion a collaborative multi-agency effort to increase efficiency in how the state uses water in urban and agricultural settings to ensure we "[Make Water Conservation a California Way of Life](#)." These actions support the goals of the [California Water Action Plan](#), a document that directs state agencies to work together to plan for and efficiently manage water needs while anticipating the impacts of climate change and the state's population growth in the next several decades.

This document answers questions on how the State Water Resources Control Board will support the Administration's planned action in key initiatives announced April 7.

Governor Rescinds Emergency Drought Declaration

On April 7, the Governor issued [Executive Order \(EO\) B-40-17](#), which lifts the drought emergency in all California counties except Fresno, Kings, Tulare, and Tuolumne. The action ends the statewide emergency drought proclamation put in place by the Governor on January 17, 2014.

What does the Executive Order Direct the State Water Board to do?

[EO B-40-17](#) directs the State Water Board to keep in place requirements such as monthly water reporting, rules, and specific prohibitions against designated wasteful water use practices until they expire later this year. Those prohibitions include outdoor watering during a rain event or 48 hours after; watering down a sidewalk with a hose instead of using a broom or a brush, or overwatering a landscape to where water is running off onto the sidewalk or into the gutter. In addition, Prohibitions against [home owners associations](#) (HOAs) and local governments from penalizing homeowners for certain outdoor conservation practices during a declared drought remain as well.

The executive order directs the State Water Board to rescind the [water supply stress test](#) for urban water suppliers as well any remaining mandatory conservation standards. Abundant precipitation and a vigorous response to the drought emergency mean most water suppliers now have an adequate local supply.

What Does Making Water Conservation a California Way of Life Mean?

Recognizing the severe effects of multi-year drought in California, Governor Brown issued [Executive Order B-37-16](#) on May 9, 2016. The Executive Order directed five State Agencies (the State Water Board, Department of Water Resources, California Department of Food and Agriculture, California Public Utilities Commission, and the California Energy Commission) to



establish a long-term water conservation framework that builds on the momentum created during drought, provides a clear path forward to making conservation a California way of life, and better positions the State to withstand future droughts.

This conservation framework, called the “[Making Water Conservation a California Way of Life Implementing Executive Order B-37-16](#),” was released on April 7. The framework includes recommendations to establish long-term water conservation standards and improved agricultural and urban water management planning to better prepare for more frequent and severe droughts. These actions will help achieve a top priority of the California Water Action Plan - to improve long-term drought preparedness and “Make Conservation a California Way of Life.”

What is the State Water Board’s Role in this Conservation Framework?

The executive order directs the State Water Board to permanently ban wasteful water use practices and to make permanent the monthly urban water use reporting requirements that began during the drought. The Board staff is currently working on permanent water conservation regulations that will include permanent prohibitions on wasteful water uses as well as mandatory water use and conservation reporting.

The executive order also calls on the Department of Water Resource to work with the State Water Board to establish new water use efficiency targets to be applied to the state’s 410 largest urban water suppliers, who supply water to more 90 percent of California residents. These new targets will ensure all urban water is used efficiently, while accounting for the unique climatic, demographic and land-use characteristics of each urban water agency’s service area.

The targets will build upon existing state law and be based on strengthened efficiency standards for indoor water use, outdoor water use, and water lost through leaks. This approach represents a fundamental shift to a conservation framework that is more durable and that can be applied equitably and consistently across California’s diverse communities.

What Does the Conservation Framework Require of Other Agencies?

The Department of Water Resources (DWR) will strengthen urban water management plans that water suppliers must submit every five years. Under new strengthened standards, suppliers will need to plan for droughts lasting at least five years, as well as more frequent and severe periods of drought. For areas not covered by an Urban Water Management Plan, DWR will work with counties to improve drought planning for small water suppliers and rural communities.

DWR working with the Department of Food Agriculture will also update existing requirements for Agricultural Water Management Plans so that irrigation districts quantify their customers’ water use efficiency and better plan for water supply shortages. The updated Agricultural Management Plans will help local decision makers target agricultural efficiency efforts and provide critical data for implementation of the Sustainable Groundwater Management Act. Current law requires agricultural water districts serving 25,000 acres or more to file such

plans. Under the proposed framework, the threshold for irrigation districts who must file water management plans will be reduced to irrigation district serving 10,000 acres or more. DWR will check the plans to ensure they quantify conservation efforts and adequately plan for water shortages.

What Does the Legislation introduced by the Governor to Implement this Conservation Framework, Require of the State Water Board?

The legislative proposal establishes authorities and deadlines for setting new long-term standards for efficient urban water use. Specifically, the proposal:

- Requires the State Water Board, in consultation with the Department of Water Resources to set long-term urban water use efficiency standards by May 20, 2021;
- Allows the State Water Board to set interim standards to ensure that progress begins before the long-term standards are adopted in 2021;
- Includes a robust public participation process to provide the State Water Board and Department with critical input from local agencies, tribal governments, non-governmental organizations, the business sector, academics, and others.

The proposal also authorizes the Board and local agencies to enforce the standards in the same manner that they have been able to enforce the Board's emergency conservation regulations during the drought. It also authorizes the Board to set emergency conservation regulations for one year instead of the current 270 days. This change will allow the Board to make future conservation determinations at the end of the winter when water conditions are known.

Background

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. Even with the declared drought over, Californians should continue to 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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