



California Legislature



November 25, 2015



Jeanine Townsend
Clerk of the Board
State Water Resources Control Board
1001 I Street, 24th Floor
Sacramento, CA 95814
commentletters@waterboards.ca.gov

RE: "Comment Letter – Urban Water Conservation Workshop"

Dear Ms. Townsend:

Thank you for the opportunity to submit these comments regarding potential changes to the Emergency Regulation for Statewide Urban Water Conservation to the State Water Resources Control Board. We appreciate the Board's efforts to achieve increased water conservation during drought conditions through the current emergency regulation.

The current regulation focuses on achieving the state's water reduction standards solely through conservation, and does not allow regional or local water agencies to realize the benefits of their investments in water supply reliability – investments in self-reliance that are consistent with Governor Brown's Water Action Plan. For example, in San Diego County we have supported our water agencies as they have made billions of dollars in investments in developing a portfolio of sustainable water supplies specifically designed to make our region less vulnerable to droughts and devastating water supply cutbacks. However, the current regulation strips away the drought protections these supplies provide by not allowing the region to benefit from these investments. This approach threatens to discourage ratepayers from supporting future water supply investment.

The imposition of demand reduction targets as the state's primary drought response places California at a competitive disadvantage in terms of business attraction and business expansion. Businesses are unlikely to relocate to, or expand their businesses in California under prolonged water use reduction mandates that ignore the availability of sustainable water supplies to meet our state's economic needs. These businesses and industries need to be convinced that the state is doing everything in its power to develop new and drought-resilient water supplies to serve their businesses. **One of the things the state can do now is amend the regulation to provide credits for new supply development.**

The emergency regulation has contributed to rising water rates for residents and businesses, as local water agencies are forced to meet their revenue requirements on lower sales. It also enhances the level of frustration of all ratepayers who are upset by the concept of “paying more for using less,” which undermines public support for ongoing conservation and continued investment in sustainable water supplies and infrastructure.

It is critical to maximize the water reliability benefits of drought-resilient and sustainable water supplies, such as the Carlsbad Desalination Project, during drought conditions to help support California’s economy and quality of life. That is why we support modifications to the emergency regulation to allow water agencies to meet reduction targets through a combination of conservation and sustainable drinking water supplies, such as desalination, potable reuse and long-term transfers of conserved water. This is a more balanced, more flexible approach to drought management that will help save water now given our current supply challenges and better prepare California for future droughts.

Sincerely,



Patricia C. Bates
Senator, 36th District



Joel Anderson
Senator, 38th District