

State Water Resources Control Board

January 23, 2015

NOTICE OF SURFACE WATER SHORTAGE AND POTENTIAL FOR CURTAILMENT OF WATER RIGHT DIVERSIONS FOR 2015

In January 2014, Governor Edmund G. Brown Jr. proclaimed a State of Emergency and directed state officials to take all necessary actions to prepare for drought conditions. The State Water Resources Control Board (State Water Board), responsible for administering California's water rights system, took a number of key actions to provide for an orderly allocation of much reduced water supplies. These actions included the curtailment of more than 9,000 water rights due to lack of supply. As the drought emergency continues, it appears that supplies this year could be just as limited or more so, if dry weather conditions persist.

The purpose of this notice is to advise all water right holders that if hydrologic conditions do not significantly improve in the next several months, the State Water Board will once again begin notifying water right holders in critically dry watersheds of the requirement to limit or stop diversions of water under their water right, based on their priority. The right to divert surface water in California is based on the type of right being claimed and when the right was initiated. In times of drought and limited supply, the most recent ("junior") right holder is the first to discontinue use. Some more senior riparian and pre-1914 water right holders can also receive a notice to stop diverting water based on their priority or limitation of natural flow. Released stored water is not natural flow, and is not available for diversion unless covered by contractual agreement.

If you are in a water short area, you should be looking into additional conservation measures and alternative water supplies for your water needs. Planting and planning decisions should be made in light of possible curtailment of junior rights. We encourage you to subscribe to the State Water Board's electronic notification updates, as this is the mechanism that will be used to provide drought information, analysis of conditions by watershed and if needed, curtailment information regarding your water right. You may subscribe at:
http://www.waterboards.ca.gov/resources/email_subscriptions/swrcb_subscribe.shtml (select Water Rights and then Drought Updates).

Information on forecasted supply and demand for select watersheds will be updated and posted on the State Water Board's drought webpage by the end of January. To learn more about how water rights work, please view the fact sheet posted at:
http://www.waterboards.ca.gov/waterrights/water_issues/programs/drought/faq.shtml .

Complaints to report illegal diversions, harm to senior water rights holders or adverse impacts to public trust resources can be submitted through the CalEPA Environmental Complaint website at:
http://www.dtsc.ca.gov/database/CalEPA_Complaint/index.cfm.

We hope that significant precipitation occurs in the next few months and the need to curtail water diversions is unnecessary. However, this notice is to encourage you to plan ahead. Whether you are a water right holder or a residential or business customer of a water service provider, all of California's water users are urged to conserve and use water wisely. For more information on the drought and the State Water Board actions, go to:
http://www.waterboards.ca.gov/waterrights/water_issues/programs/drought/index.shtml.

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