



# Fact Sheet

## **RESULTS OF URBAN WATER USE AND CONSERVATION SURVEY FOCUS OF STATE WATER BOARD DISCUSSION**

Water conservation efforts by a majority of water suppliers in California show that water use has declined statewide by 5 percent through May 2014, according to survey results received by the State Water Resources Control Board (State Water Board).

This observation is one of several results of a survey to be discussed by the State Water Board during an informational [Board discussion item](#) June 17 intended to solicit urban water supplier input on how to increase or improve statewide conservation measures, as called for by the Governor in his [January 17, 2014](#) Emergency Drought Proclamation.

An [April 25 Executive Order](#) by Governor Brown directed the State Water Board to ask urban water suppliers and agencies for an update on their actions to reduce water usage and the effectiveness of those efforts. In response, the Department of Water Resources, Department of Public Health, California Urban Water Conservation Council, California Urban Water Agencies, and the Association of California Water Agencies assisted in developing questions for a self-reported survey which was sent to all urban water suppliers and agencies on May 23. Responses were due to the State Water Board June 6.

Urban water suppliers are expected on June 17 to discuss steps they have taken to reduce water use and plans they have in place to conserve water further. Information on both voluntary and mandatory actions that are now in place, or are planned, to accelerate conservation will help the Board to consider emergency regulations are necessary to assist water agencies in meeting these conservation goals. The April 25 Executive Order asked the State Water Board to do the following:

- Request an update from urban water agencies on their actions to reduce water usage and the effectiveness of these efforts by June 16.
- Direct urban water suppliers that are not already implementing drought response plans to limit outdoor irrigation and other wasteful water practices.
- Consider adopting emergency regulations pursuant to Water Code section 1058.5, to implement this directive if the Board determines such a move would help local and regional water districts reach conservation goals and preserve potable water supplies.



The 5 percent reduction through May 2014 follows three years (2011-2013) of lower water use due to dry conditions and a slow economic recovery. Preliminary data show that May 2014 water use declined significantly from May water use during 2011-2013. Approximately 270 out of 440 urban water suppliers responded to the survey.

According to the survey, while water conservation has been encouraged by urban water suppliers, measured water use hasn't yet met a 20 percent voluntary reduction of water use called for by Governor Brown in two emergency drought declarations this year.

Survey results indicate that 30 percent urban water suppliers have mandatory water use cuts in place, while the remaining 70 percent of those who responded to the survey stated they have not instituted mandatory measures, such as limits on outdoor irrigation, vehicle washing, and filling of fountains and pools. Such measures can increase conservation significantly. Many communities in the state have successfully adopted mandatory water use restrictions and conserved water.

Regions of the state with less water available initiated conservation measures much earlier in the year. Large cities in various regions of the state supplied by wholesale water agencies have relied upon stored reserves, and therefore haven't instituted significant conservation efforts so far this year. Preliminary survey data suggests that urban water suppliers can do more to support water conservation by residents and businesses.

The State Water Board is requesting input on:

- 1) Whether the actions being taken by urban water agencies are effective in reducing water usage,
- 2) If the Board should adopt emergency regulations to require certain actions, and
- 3) What those actions would be.

At the end of the informational meeting, the State Water Board could direct staff to propose a draft emergency regulatory package that addresses methods to strengthen statewide compliance with the Governor's conservation mandate.

### **What Types of Actions Could be Considered in an Emergency Rulemaking**

- Outdoor irrigation practices, such as landscape irrigation use of water for washing vehicles, hosing down streets and driveways; filling of swimming pools and ornamental fountains;
- Leak repair for household and commercial properties, as well as water distribution systems;
- Water Shortage Contingency Plan implementation; and
- Data collection to assess progress toward conservation goals as we move into the hot summer months when use is highest.