



# Media Release

## **Water Board releases revised conservation regulation draft to simplify compliance, increase flexibility**

March 12, 2024

Contact: [Edward Ortiz](#) – Information Officer

**SACRAMENTO** – Moving to bolster California’s water supplies and resilience to climate change, the State Water Resources Control Board today released a revised draft of a proposed regulation that would establish, for the first time, budget-based water conservation targets for the over 400 large water suppliers that supply most Californians with water.

The revised draft reflects substantial public input and engagement with interested parties since the first draft was released in August 2023. Changes include extending timelines for water suppliers to meet efficiency goals, broadening their access to alternative compliance pathways and increasing the overall flexibility for how the proposed regulation can be implemented.

The revised draft regulation would apply to water suppliers and not individuals or households, and was developed to implement [2018 legislation](#) known as “Making Conservation a California Way of Life.” Today opens a second opportunity for public comment that runs through March 26. The State Water Board expects to consider adoption of the regulation this summer.

Water conservation is an important component of the state’s all-of-the-above [Water Supply Strategy](#) to address an anticipated 10% reduction in water supply by 2040, which includes expanding storage, recycling, desalination and stormwater capture projects.

“We are grateful for the extensive public input that informed the revisions in the regulation,” said Eric Oppenheimer, executive director for the board. “Conservation is a key tool to help the state better manage our diminishing water supply in a new climate reality. The changes to the draft regulation propose a way to do this that maintains the state’s commitment to conservation while making it easier for water suppliers to meet their efficiency goals.”



Under the proposed regulation, water suppliers would develop their own budgets for six different urban water needs and then use them to calculate a total [water use objective](#). The six budget categories are: residential indoor water use, residential outdoor water use, water loss (or the amount lost to leakage), and the irrigation of commercial, industrial and institutional landscapes. The regulation requires suppliers to meet their overall objective only, not the budget set for each of the components.

The regulation will save more water over time as water suppliers calculate water budgets based on gradually more efficient water standards. Water suppliers must meet their objectives but may do so how they choose. This includes a wide variety of approaches, such as educating customers about using water wisely, fixing leaks, supporting the planting of more-water-efficient landscapes, and offering rebates or vouchers to replace old and inefficient fixtures and appliances.

“The Legislature recognized that conservation is not one-size-fits-all, so the proposed regulation provides water suppliers with the tools and flexibility to adjust their conservation actions to local conditions and unique circumstances,” added Oppenheimer. “And for some suppliers that still find meeting their objectives challenging, the draft regulation offers alternative, easier ways to do so.”

The revised draft increases the number of suppliers that would qualify for alternative compliance pathways. It also extends the effective date for meeting objectives based on the most efficient outdoor standards by five years. Additionally, the draft delays the board’s assessment of suppliers’ compliance with the regulation until 2027, though they will still be required to report their objectives and water use.

The board will hold a public workshop on the revisions to the draft regulation on March 20 during a regularly scheduled public meeting of the board. More information, including supplier-level data, is available on the board’s [website](#).

*The State Water Board’s mission is to preserve, enhance and restore the quality of California’s water resources and drinking water for the protection of the environment, public health and all beneficial uses, and to ensure proper resource allocation and efficient use for the benefit of present and future generations.*