



Fact Sheet

The State Water Board to Consider Proposed Emergency Water Conservation Regulations

On January 17 Governor Edmund G. Brown Jr. issued a drought emergency proclamation following three dry or critically dry years in California. [Extreme drought now covers nearly 80 percent of the state](#) and these conditions will likely continue into the foreseeable future.

More than, 400,000 acres of farmland are expected to be fallowed, thousands of people may be out of work, communities risk running out of drinking water and fish and wildlife species are in jeopardy. Many communities are down to 50 gallons a day or less per person for basic sanitation needs. With our inability to predict the effect of the next rainy season, water saved today can improve a region's water security and add flexibility to systems that may need to withstand another year or more with precipitation below average.

There are many ways to boost local water supplies such as recycling treated wastewater and reusing some household or industrial water onsite. However, conservation is the easiest, most efficient and most cost effective way to quickly reduce water demand and extend supplies into the next year, providing flexibility for all California communities. In a survey conducted by the State Water Board in June, while many communities have significantly reduced their water demand over time, it is clear that more can be done.

Conservation Actions Needed

Because of these dire conditions and the need to conserve more, the State Water Resources Control Board (State Water Board) is proposing that individuals and water agencies take necessary steps to conserve water supplies both for this year and into 2015, and is recommending that individuals and water agencies do even more voluntarily to manage our precious water resources.

Most Californians use more water outdoors than indoors. In some areas, 50 percent or more of our daily water use is for lawns and outdoor landscaping. Some urban communities have been investing in conservation, particularly indoors, for years, but reducing the amount of water used outdoors can make the biggest difference of all.

The proposed emergency conservation regulations are primarily directed at reducing outdoor urban water use.



These emergency conservation measures target both individual water use, by identifying the practices from which every Californian should abstain during this drought emergency, as well as the steps that local water suppliers should be taking to reduce water demand in their service areas. These restrictions set a minimum level of effort in this time of emergency and everyone should do more voluntarily. As the drought wears on, the State Water Board may revisit these regulations and consider other measures.

Temporary Water Restrictions

All Californians will be affected by the ongoing drought conditions in one form or another, especially if these conditions persist or worsen in 2015. To promote water conservation statewide, the emergency regulations would prohibit each of the following, except in case of health or safety needs or to comply with a term or condition in a permit issued by a state or federal agency:

- The direct application of water to any hard surface for washing.
- Watering of outdoor landscapes that cause runoff to adjacent property, non-irrigated areas, private and public walkways, roadways, parking lots or structures.
- Using a hose to wash an automobile, unless the hose is fitted with a shut-off nozzle.
- Using potable water in a fountain or decorative water feature, unless the water is recirculated.

Violations of prohibited activities are considered infractions and are punishable by fines of \$500 for each day in which the violation occurs. Any employee of a public agency charged with enforcing laws may write and issue a ticket to the violator.

Action by Urban Water Suppliers Required

To reduce water demand, the regulations would require urban water suppliers to implement their Water Shortage Contingency Plans at a level that triggers mandatory restrictions on outdoor water use. Almost all urban water suppliers (those with more than 3,000 water connections) have these plans; about 40 of these larger agencies do not.

If an urban water supplier does not have a Water Shortage Contingency Plan or its Plan does not meet the requirements of the water code, the supplier must, within 30 days, require customers to limit outdoor irrigation to no more than two days per week or implement another mandatory conservation measure to achieve a comparable reduction in water consumption by the people it serves relative to the amount consumed in 2013.

Water suppliers serving fewer than 3,000 connections must also, within 30 days, require customers to limit outdoor irrigation to no more than two days per week or implement another mandatory conservation measure to achieve a comparable reduction in water consumption by the people it serves relative to the amount consumed in 2013.

Urban water suppliers that violate mandatory actions could be subject to cease and desist orders for violating emergency regulations with fines up to \$10,000 per day per violation. Or, the matter could be referred to the Attorney General's office for further action.

Keeping Track of Urban Water Use

Each urban water supplier will keep track of its water use and compare it to the same period last year. Reports that include the amount of potable water the supplier produced in the preceding month and an estimate of gallons of water per person per day used by its customers will be submitted to the State Water Board by the 15th of each month.

Looking Forward

The State Water Board is providing the following tips to water suppliers to educate their customers about the new requirements:

- Retail water suppliers should provide notice of the regulations in English and Spanish in one or more of the following ways: newspaper advertisements, bill inserts, website homepage, social media, notices in public libraries;
- Wholesale suppliers should include reference to the regulations in all of their customer communications;
- All water suppliers should provide signage where recycled or reclaimed water is being used for activities that the emergency regulations prohibit with the use of potable water, such as operation of fountains and other water features;
- All water suppliers should train personnel on the regulations; and
- All water suppliers should set conservation targets, measure their service area's progress and make this information available to their customers.

In addition to letting customers know about the new requirements, water suppliers should also:

- Have an easy way for customers to report leaks and water waste via phone or electronic submittal (website form, or email); and
- Request that police and fire departments and other local government personnel report leaks and water waste they encounter during their routine duties/patrols

If drought conditions continue, additional actions by the State Water Board and local water suppliers will likely be necessary to further increase conservation. All water suppliers are encouraged to be prepared and plan for a possible dry 2015 now.

Next Steps

The proposed emergency regulations will be considered by the State Water Board at its July 15th meeting. Written comments are due by 12 noon on July 14, 2014. If adopted and subsequently approved by the Office of Administrative Law, they would go into effect on or about August 1st.