



Media Release

Urban Water Conservation Plummetts In February

MANDATORY 25 PERCENT CONSERVATION MEASURES TO FOLLOW GOVERNOR'S ACTION

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SACRAMENTO – With April snow measured at its lowest level on record, the State Water Resources Control Board (State Water Board) announced that Californians in cities and towns reduced their water consumption by just 2.8 percent in February. This dismal conservation rate is the lowest monthly figure since the State Water Board began tracking the data in July 2014. Today's announcement comes just days after the State Water Board delivered a [second notice](#) to water rights holders – including those with senior water rights – of coming curtailments of their surface water supplies.

“Today's announced February results are very disturbing and provides even more support for the Governor's call for an immediate 25 percent mandatory reduction in urban water use statewide,” said State Water Board Chair Felicia Marcus. “I know many communities in the state stepped up since last summer and dramatically conserved water. But not enough communities in the state have saved enough water. Beginning today, to assure their own water security as well as help others, communities should restrict outdoor irrigation to the bare minimum. If we dramatically stop watering out-of-doors, we should be able to reduce water use by 25 percent or more in the next several months since an average of 50 percent of urban water use is used outdoors.”

In the most recent survey of more than 400 urban water retailers, the amount of water saved by the state's large urban water agency customers statewide declined from 8 percent in January to approximately 2.8 percent in February, in same month water use comparisons of 2015 to 2013. The year 2013 serves as a baseline to determine water savings statewide since the 2014 emergency water conservation regulations have been in effect.

On April 1, Governor Brown issued an [Executive Order](#) mandating a 25 percent reduction in water use for all urban water users.

The State Water Board expects to consider on May 5 an emergency water conservation regulation that requires a mandatory 25 percent reduction in urban water use statewide beginning the month following Board adoption. That regulation will use a sliding scale, so that communities that have been conserving water will have lower mandates than those that haven't conserved this past year and/or over the last decade since the last major drought.

CALIFORNIA ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY



STATE WATER RESOURCES CONTROL BOARD

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On March 17, the State Water Board adopted an expanded [emergency conservation regulation](#) to safeguard the state’s remaining water supplies as California enters a fourth consecutive dry year. Today, board members discussed the importance of the State Water Board having measures in place by June, following the Governor’s latest Executive Order, to assist water districts and their customers to ensure water conservation remains a priority for all Californians.

“In this extremely serious situation, the Governor is calling for immediate reductions. Californians need to step up now -- especially those who have not been doing their share,” said Marcus. “We are in a drought like we’ve not seen before, and we all need to step up like never before.”

Water Conservation Efforts Decline

Monthly residential water savings statewide were just 2.8 percent in February compared with February 2013. That is down from the 8 percent water savings in January compared with January 2013. Broken down by hydrologic region, the results show that some parts of the state saved much less water than in any month since reporting began last summer. In some areas water use increased, rather than declined. A few hydrologic regions sustained significant water conservation in February.

From June 2014 through February 2015, more than 148 billion gallons of water have been saved compared with the same period in 2013 – enough to supply 1.99 million California residents for a year.

Water Production Reductions from June 2014 to February 2015

Hydrologic Region	Jun-14	Jul-14	Aug-14	Sep-14	Oct-14	Nov-14	Dec-14	Jan-15	Feb-15	Trend
Central Coast	9.5%	13.7%	15.3%	16.0%	14.1%	21.2%	29.3%	9.7%	7.6%	
Colorado River	6.6%	3.1%	7.0%	5.9%	5.3%	6.6%	6.3%	12.4%	-0.5%	
North Coast	3.8%	10.4%	13.2%	9.5%	22.1%	19.5%	15.9%	15.3%	7.3%	
North Lahontan	3.7%	5.0%	13.7%	-0.1%	-6.3%	-2.5%	14.2%	4.7%	13.9%	
Sacramento River	11.9%	19.7%	22.0%	16.4%	18.6%	25.7%	21.5%	5.5%	14.2%	
San Francisco Bay	10.3%	12.9%	14.9%	15.3%	14.9%	17.7%	21.0%	3.1%	8.0%	
San Joaquin River	6.6%	12.3%	13.2%	9.9%	9.9%	20.8%	18.7%	12.1%	13.5%	
South Coast	-0.4%	1.6%	7.9%	7.5%	1.9%	3.4%	23.3%	8.4%	-2.3%	
South Lahontan	5.2%	3.8%	9.5%	7.9%	0.0%	1.2%	9.1%	12.8%	10.7%	
Tulare Lake	7.7%	11.7%	12.9%	11.8%	6.3%	17.3%	27.4%	9.9%	9.4%	
Statewide	4.3%	7.5%	11.6%	10.2%	6.8%	10.0%	22.1%	8.0%	2.8%	

The decline in water savings by one of the most populated regions of the state did impact the statewide average for February. The South Coast hydrologic region actually increased its water use in February as compared to the February 2013 baseline. This increase had a

considerable impact on the statewide average because 56 percent of all residential water customers in the state are in the South Coast hydrologic region.

The report also found that in February, 96 percent of the water agencies reporting had instituted mandatory outdoor water use restrictions. Outdoor water use restrictions are a key requirement for urban water suppliers under the [Emergency Water Conservation Regulation](#) because outdoor watering accounts for as much as 80 percent of urban water use in some areas.

Per Capita Daily Water Use Rises Slightly

In addition to the conservation data, the State Water Board also discussed the reported residential gallons per-capita per day (R-GPCD) for February. The discussion focused on estimated daily water use by residential customers for more than 400 urban water agencies statewide.

The statewide R-GPCD average for February was 76.7 gallons per person per day, a slight increase from January when the statewide average use was 73.1 gallons per person per day. At the low end, the San Francisco Bay hydrologic region averaged 57.9 gallons per person per day. On the high end, the Colorado River hydrologic region averaged 165.6 gallons per person per day. A handful of suppliers have reached R-GPCD levels below 45. State Water Board staff continues to study this trend in an effort to understand what is driving the reduction in water use in some hydrologic regions but not others.

The water use reports are a requirement of the Emergency Water Conservation Regulation adopted by the State Water Board in July 2014 and [renewed](#) in March and are provided to the Board monthly by urban water suppliers. The Governor's Executive Order last week directs the State Water Board to collect this information on a permanent basis. The complete report is posted [here](#).

Examples of some communities with the respective R-GPCD averages for February 2015 in various hydrologic areas (in parenthesis) include: San Francisco Public Utilities Commission (San Francisco Bay) with 44 R-GPCD; City of Santa Cruz (Central Coast) with 44 R-GPCD; California-American Water Company Monterey District (Central Coast) 52 R-GPCD; City of Santa Rosa (North Coast) with 52 R-GPCD; City of Stockton (San Joaquin River) with 56 R-GPCD; City of San Diego (South Coast), with 59 R-GPCD; San Jose Water Company (San Francisco Bay), with 59 R-GPCD; City of Fresno (Tulare Lake), with 60 R-GPCD; City of Sacramento (Sacramento River) with 62 R-GPCD; Los Angeles Department of Water and Power (South Coast), with 69 R-GPCD; City of Riverside (South Coast), with 74 R-GPCD; Sacramento County Water Agency (Sacramento River), with 81 R-GPCD, and California Water Services Company, Bakersfield (Tulare Lake) with 99 R-GPCD).

For additional information on water use, please visit the following resources:

- The Pacific Institute has an R-GPCD mapping tool [here](#).
- The State Drinking Water Program has an urban water R-GPCD Calculator [here](#).

Background

In his April 1 Executive Order, Governor Brown mandated a 25 percent water use reduction for cities and towns across California.

During 2014, the State Water Board took action to increase access to recycled water in an effort to augment scarce water supplies. Water recycling is the use of treated municipal wastewater for beneficial purposes, such as agricultural and landscape irrigation, industrial processes, and replenishing ground water basins. In March, the Board approved new low-interest financing terms for water recycling projects to help California produce an additional 150,000 acre-feet of recycled water annually. The effort makes available \$800 million in loans for projects such as recycled water treatment, distribution and storage facilities that can be completed by 2017. In June, the Board adopted a general order that makes it easier for communities to use non-potable recycled water for agriculture, landscape and golf course irrigation, and other uses. During the year, various regional boards took action to approve the use of recycled water for local projects under their jurisdiction.

For more than two years, California has been dealing with the effects of drought. To learn about all the actions the state has taken to manage our water system and cope with the impacts of the drought, visit Drought.CA.Gov.

Every Californian should take steps to conserve water. Find out how at SaveOurWater.com.

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