



# CALAVERAS COUNTY WATER DISTRICT

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January 6, 2016

Kathy Frevert, Senior Environmental Scientist  
State Water Resources Control Board  
P.O. 1000  
Sacramento, CA 95812  
Via e-mail: [Kathy.Frevert@waterboards.ca.gov](mailto:Kathy.Frevert@waterboards.ca.gov)

## Re: CCWD Comments on Proposed Regulatory Framework for Extended Emergency Regulation for Urban Water Conservation

Dear Ms. Frevert:

The Calaveras County Water District (CCWD) appreciates the opportunity to comment on the State Water Resources Control Board (SWRCB) "Proposed Regulatory Framework for Extended Emergency Regulation for Urban Water Conservation". CCWD is a special district responsible for administering water, wastewater and hydroelectric power throughout Calaveras County. The District has six noncontiguous water service areas spread across Calaveras County in three watersheds that serve approximately 13,000 connections, many of which are within economically disadvantaged communities.

As the SWRCB evaluates additional water conservation measures due to potential ongoing drought conditions, I would like to point out that being responsive to the Governor and State Board's call for additional conservation in the face of continued drought was at the forefront of our staff efforts last year. As the largest water provider in Calaveras County, CCWD views water conservation as an integral part of our integrated water resources management efforts, and we are dedicated to working with regional partners to meet statewide goals. As a result of CCWD's enhanced conservation measures, when compared to 2013 levels, our customers reduced their water usage by an average of 31% for the period of April through November 2015. This success came with considerable financial cost to the District and our customers, a fact we hope the SWRCB and staff continue to recognize as emergency regulations are considered by the Board.

CCWD is generally supportive of the draft framework, and has previously submitted verbal and written comments at the December 7, 2015, workshop. CCWD respectfully offers the following comments in response to the December 21, 2015, release of the Proposed Regulatory Framework for Extended Emergency Regulation for Urban Water Conservation:

**1) CCWD supports the concept of a climate adjusted standard and requirement for our customers.** The majority of our customers live in the transitional zone extending from the San Joaquin Valley to the lower Sierra Foothills. These areas are subject to high evapotranspiration rates and poor soil moisture retention. Many of our customers have larger residential lot sizes in a more rural setting, and customers may have been forced to cease watering fruit trees, vegetable gardens, modest vineyards and landscaping due to imposed conservation requirements. Not only do the investments made in those outdoor environments benefit our customers and region by raising food locally, they are also a significant resource for wildlife that have come to depend on

them for sustenance in dry years. Allowing flexibility in the requirements due to local climate will reduce the unfair burden of statewide conservation on these customers who have significant investments in the outdoor environments of their properties. The flexibility will also allow for the preservation of outdoor environments critical to local wildlife, birds, insects and reptiles that are part of our rural watersheds.

**2) The District supports the SWRCB's recommendation to include an adjustment that accounts for growth.** Though CCWD has experienced little growth since the housing market collapse in 2007, we expect significant growth will occur in Calaveras County in the future. We believe it is equitable to account for this growth, and we support the SWRCB staff proposal to include a growth adjustment. However, the use of just 55 GPCD is too low, We believe, consistent with both SBX7-7 as well as California Code of Regulations, Title 23, Division3, § 697 that 75 GPCD is more appropriate.

**3) CCWD recommends the SWRCB include a credit for groundwater recharge.** A portion of the critically over drafted Eastern San Joaquin Groundwater Basin lies beneath the western slope of Calaveras County. CCWD is working with regional partners to help recharge this aquifer. The inclusion of a credit for groundwater recharge would incentivize water purveyors to cooperatively make investments to return over-drafted groundwater basins to sustainable levels, which is in consistent with the intent of Sustainable Groundwater Management Act (SGMA) as well as the Governor's "California Water Action Plan" of 2014 (Item #6, Page 13). Investments in groundwater storage are made, in many cases, with the express purpose of being able to utilize those resources when surface supplies may be constrained. Hence the term ground water banking. A savings account that can only be used in times of financial surplus is not the best money management tool, in the same way a groundwater storage project that can't be used in dry years is not the best water management investment. The Staff recommendation undercuts the value of regional partnerships in sustainable groundwater management actions as well as the fiscal investments needed to develop and maintain groundwater basins at a sustainable level.

**6) CCWD supports the SWRCB staff's recommendation to continue using the existing population adjustment methodology that was put in place in 2015:** Along with many other districts throughout the state, CCWD worked with State Board staff to apply a population adjustment during months of the year that have high transient populations. The existing method of calculating population adjustments reflects the actual conditions in the CCWD service area and the District does not support change to the existing process.

**7) The District does not agree with the SWRCB staff's recommendation to limit any adjustments resulting from credits to 4%.** In this time of drought, CCWD believes that literally all efforts made by water purveyors to make the best use of water should be recognized and rewarded. By prohibiting the "stacking" of credits, the SWRCB is effectively removing incentives for water purveyors to continue maximize highly effective water efficiency programs and make significant investments in system infrastructure and new efficiency projects. This portion of the regulations, even in a short-term emergency context, will create the unintended consequence of fewer efficiency improvements being made.

It is essential that the SWRCB "signal" the water agencies that implementation of the California Water Action Plan (CWAP) is a priority for the Board. Investments need to be made across a broad spectrum of integrated resource areas to implement CWAP. The District requests that the SWRCB remove the 4% limitation on credits and instead reward the forward-thinking implementation of the CWAP as envisioned by the Governor and the water agencies of the State.

**8) We continue to urge the SWRCB to allow for the consideration and evaluation of total water system efficiencies and not simply end user R-GPCD metrics.** For example, efficiencies in treated water distribution systems, particularly in older, rural systems, can be a cost effective and efficient way to reduce system water losses. CCWD has prioritized overall system-wide efficiency in our water planning program. This includes using ratepayer dollars to invest in new pipelines, tank replacement projects and other water infrastructure upgrades that save water. The efficient use of water resources is, after all, the objective of the CWAP, which succinctly states, *"Make Conservation a California Way of Life"*<sup>1</sup>. The SWRCB should be supportive of the CWAP and include distribution system efficiencies, as defined by the local water agency consistent with SBX 7-7, as improvements in the efficient use of water.

This is similar to the SWRCB's proposal for drought resilient sources of supply credit in the current draft framework. SWRCB staff mentions the San Diego County Water Authority's proposal for a credit for significant work it completed as part of the Colorado River transfer, lining the earthen canals in the Imperial Valley, which was unfortunately rejected by Board staff. CCWD supports this concept, and requests the Board incorporate this type of credit utilizing a system-wide, integrated water resources management perspective. This should be in the form of water purveyors receiving a credit for immediately planned projects to replace aging infrastructure, whereby the purveyor should demonstrably show reduced system losses over post-construction.

Thank you for considering our comments in the development of these prospective regulations. If you have any questions, please contact Joel Metzger, our Water Conservation Coordinator at (209) 754-3123 or [joelm@ccwd.org](mailto:joelm@ccwd.org).

CALAVERAS COUNTY WATER DISTRICT



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Dave Eggerton  
General Manager

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<sup>1</sup> California Natural Resources Agency, California Department of Food and Agriculture, California Environmental Protection Agency, *California Water Action Plan* (2014): 5.