



Media Release

State proposes regulation on how to make conservation a California way of life

If adopted, estimated reduction in water use would reach 9% in 2035, saving enough to supply 1.3 million households for a year and help meet Water Supply Strategy goals

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SACRAMENTO – Moving to bolster California’s water supplies and resilience to climate change through long-term water conservation practices, the State Water Resources Control Board today released a [proposed regulation](#) that would establish water efficiency goals for urban retail water suppliers in California.

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.

The proposed regulation was developed to implement [2018 legislation](#), known as the “Making Conservation a California Way of Life” framework, which directed the board to adopt standards for more efficient urban water use along with performance measures for commercial, industrial, and institutional water use.

Each goal — called an [urban water use objective](#) — would take into consideration unique local conditions and special circumstances. Water suppliers, not individual households or businesses, would be held to the specified water use objectives.

If the State Water Board adopts the proposed regulation, the overall estimated reduction in water use would reach 8% in 2030, saving 414,000 acre-feet of water, and 9% in 2035, saving 446,000 acre-feet of water, enough to supply 1.3 million households for a year.

“We’re building on lived and learned experiences from the last drought to prepare for increasing extremes in weather throughout the West,” said Eric Oppenheimer, chief deputy director for the State Water Board. “Climate change challenges us to build conservation into how we manage, supply and use water daily going forward. This regulation proposes to do that in a way that’s balanced and achievable. It would set unique objectives for each water supplier while allowing significant flexibility to implement locally appropriate ways to meet them.”

The proposed regulation reflects and builds upon information that water suppliers and others provided to the Department of Water Resources, which later submitted recommendations to the State Water Board.

Statewide, there are over 400 urban retail water suppliers — publicly and privately run agencies that deliver water to 95% of Californians. The proposed regulation would require suppliers to annually calculate their objective, which is the sum of efficiency budgets for a subset of urban water uses: residential indoor water use, residential outdoor water use, real water loss, and commercial, industrial and institutional landscapes with dedicated irrigation meters. Each efficiency budget will be calculated using a statewide efficiency standard and local service area characteristics, such as population, climate and landscape area.

To meet their objectives, suppliers are encouraged to use a wide variety of tactics to equip their customers with information and resources to foster wise water use, indoors and outdoors. Examples include education and outreach, leak detection, incentives to plant “climate ready” landscapes, and rebates to replace old and inefficient fixtures and appliances. The state’s Save Our Water [website](#) offers templates that suppliers can adapt for their needs.

After the Office of Administrative Law publishes the draft regulation, expected on Aug. 18, the rulemaking process officially begins, and the board will consider adoption of the proposed regulation within one year. The rulemaking process includes opportunities for public comment, which the board will consider and may lead to changes to the regulation.

More information, including the [water use objective exploration tool](#), is available on the State Water Board website: [Making Conservation A California Way of Life webpage](#) and in a [Fact Sheet](#) on the regulation.

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 present and future generations.