



Media Release

State Water Board readopts decorative grass watering ban on business and government properties

Conserving and storing water remains critical for communities recovering from multi-year drought conditions, preparing against climate change

May 31, 2023

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

SACRAMENTO – The State Water Resources Control Board has readopted an [emergency regulation](#) that bans using drinking water for watering decorative grass (also referred to as non-functional turf) in commercial, industrial and institutional areas throughout the state.

The State Water Board’s readoption of this regulation signals the real need for Californians to continue using water wisely, and it aligns with Gov. Gavin Newsom’s March 2023 executive order affirming that the multi-year drought continues to have significant, immediate impacts on communities with vulnerable water supplies across California. Although conditions have improved, they have not abated severe drought conditions that remain in some parts of the state, including those with groundwater basins that are depleted.

The regulation bans watering non-functional turf, which generally is mowed grass that is not used for recreational or other community activities, at commercial, industrial and institutional properties. This applies to areas like grass in front of or next to large commercial buildings, and some common areas managed by homeowners’ associations. In addition to not applying to grass used for recreational or other community activities, the ban does not affect or prohibit watering residential lawns or trees. In fact, the state encourages people to keep watering trees because of their many environmental benefits. The ban also does not prohibit using recycled water for irrigating non-functional turf.

“We all have a shared responsibility to continue to limit non-essential outdoor water use while the state grapples with extreme weather and plans for possible dry conditions this summer and into the next wet season,” said Joaquin Esquivel, chair of the State Water Board. “This readopted regulation will help us continue to protect California’s water resources in hotter, drier conditions.”

The regulation was initially adopted by the board in May 2022 and went into effect in June 2022. Once approved by the Office of Administrative Law and filed with the



CALIFORNIA ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY

STATE WATER RESOURCES CONTROL BOARD

1001 I Street, Sacramento, CA 95814 • Mailing Address: P.O. Box 100, Sacramento, CA 95812-0100 • www.waterboards.ca.gov



Secretary of State, the extension of the ban will go into effect for one additional year. It would have expired in June 2023, if not readopted.

With this readoption, there are two State Water Board water conservation emergency regulations in place. The other is an emergency regulation prohibiting wasteful water uses. That regulation, readopted in December 2022 and still in effect, prohibits outdoor watering causing substantial water to run onto sidewalks and other areas, and the use of potable water for washing hard surfaces like driveways or sidewalks. Violations of these prohibitions or of the newly extended non-functional turf watering ban are considered infractions.

Agencies already authorized to enforce the existing water regulations, like water suppliers and local governments, still are empowered to address violations of the non-functional turf watering regulation. In some areas, similar prohibitions are required by local plans or ordinances.

For more information on this and other statewide water restrictions, go to the [State Water Board's Water Conservation Emergency Regulation page](#).

#

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.