

Background

The State Water Board adopted revised Emergency Urban Water Conservation Regulations in May 2016. Those regulations became effective June 1, 2016 and expire February 28, 2017. In addition to consideration of revising or extending the emergency regulations, Executive Order B-37-16 requires the Board to develop a proposal by January 2017 for achieving mandatory conservation reductions that build off of the previous 25% mandatory levels and incorporate lessons learned.

Improving Water Supply Conditions

Water supply conditions continue to improve based on precipitation and reservoir and snow pack storage compared to the last several years. However, we are only halfway through the traditionally wet period of the year. History shows that rains can stop suddenly and not return. Additionally, some parts of the state – specifically parts of the Central Valley and pockets along the lower Central Coast (near Santa Barbara) are still experiencing water supply shortfalls and five years of drought have left us with a significant water supply deficit, especially when it comes to our groundwater basins.

Information on Drought Assessment

Drought is a function of impacts, which may be local. There's no rulebook for when a drought is declared or rescinded. A report published by the Department of Water Resources in 2015 contains useful information about the tricky business of declaring drought. The report can be found at the following link: http://www.water.ca.gov/waterconditions/docs/a9237_CalSignificantDroughts_v10_int.pdf.

Staff-Proposed Extension of Emergency Regulation

Staff proposes to continue the existing stress test approach and revisit it if updated conditions warrant. Water suppliers would be allowed to re-submit stress test data with up-to-date information if significant changes have occurred (new supplies, changing reservoir conditions, etc.). Staff also proposes to continue all other aspects of the existing emergency regulation, including:

- Monthly reporting on water production and local enforcement action
- Prohibited water uses (e.g., no irrigation during and for 48 hours after rain)
- Ability to issue Informational and Conservation Orders

Staff also proposes to add Water Board enforcement authority against municipalities that issue fines or citations for brown lawns in violation of statute.

If conditions warrant, staff will return to the Board in May or June 2017 with an updated proposal.