

Questions and Answers - Achieving Governor Schwarzenegger's New Water Conservation Goal

On February 28, 2008 Governor Schwarzenegger described a seven-part comprehensive plan for improving the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta. Item number one on the Governor's list is an aggressive new goal for water conservation in California. Here are questions and answers about the Governor's new goal:

1. What did the Governor say?

The Governor's letter to State Senate leadership describes administrative actions under consideration as part of a comprehensive solution in the Delta, and includes a key element regarding conservation:

“A plan to achieve a 20 percent reduction in per capita water use statewide by 2020. Conservation is one of the key ways to provide water for Californians and protect and improve the Delta ecosystem. A number of efforts are already underway to expand conservation programs, but I plan to direct state agencies to develop this more aggressive plan and implement it to the extent permitted by current law. I would welcome legislation to incorporate this goal into statute.”

2. How much water is that?

Urban water use in California is about 8.7 million acre-feet per year. Reducing that use by 20% would conserve about 1.74 million acre-feet per year enough water to serve more than 2 million families a year. Population growth – new water users – will tend to increase urban water uses somewhat, offsetting the savings.

3. Is this goal achievable?

Yes. It is well within the range of water conservation potential described in the *California Water Plan Update 2005* and projections in the 2006 *CALFED Water Use Efficiency Comprehensive Evaluation*. The Water Plan projects a range of potential savings in 2030 from 1.2 to 3.1 million acre-feet a year. The CALFED report points out that if urban water agencies implement all current cost-effective conservation measures and there is an additional \$15 million per year in state and federal grant funding through 2030, we could conserve an additional 1.2 to 2.1 million acre-feet a year.

4. How will we achieve these savings? What programs are in place?

Water users and water agencies have many projects, programs, and sources of information to help them conserve. Some of the tools available include:

- The California Water Plan. The latest update published in 2005 provides a strategic plan for water management, laying the foundation for water conservation and other resource management activities.

- **Bond funding.** There is grant funding (Prop 50) available to help agencies and regions plan and implement water management programs. \$35 million in water conservation grants will be offered spring, 2008, and \$1 billion in integrated regional water management funding (Prop 84) will be available starting later in 2008.
- **Access to funds.** A new law enacted in 2007, AB 1420, will require most water agencies to implement a series of water conservation measures in order to be eligible for water management grant funds. Since so much grant funding will be available in the next few years, this will be a powerful incentive for local agencies to have strong and comprehensive conservation programs.
- **Efficiency standards.** Showerheads, faucets, toilets, clothes washers are all more water-efficient because California has led the nation in establishing strong standards. New laws will require even more efficient toilets in the future, new standards for irrigation controllers are planned, and other new building and appliance standards are possible in the future.
- **New programs and tools.** The California Department of Water Resources is working on programs that will help communities and customers conserve water. A new Model Water Efficient Landscape Ordinance is under development that local governments will be able to adopt as their own. Landscape conservation offers more potential savings than any other single conservation measure. Also, DWR is upgrading the California Irrigation Management Information System, a network of automated weather stations around the state that measure how much water landscapes or crops need. System upgrades will enable the system to communicate with a new generation of automated irrigation controllers.
- **Collaboration.** Hundreds of water agencies, environmental organizations, and others work together under the banner of the California Urban Water Conservation Council. Since 1991 this organization has set voluntary standards for conservation programs. Over the next year the CUWCC will be revising its approach and its standards to ensure that California conservation programs are cost-effective and achieve the savings we need.
- **Regulatory protection.** The State Water Resources Control Board is entrusted with the responsibility to ensure beneficial use of water in California and prevent waste and unreasonable use.

5. Will any new conservation programs be developed?

Although there are many programs available, it is likely that we will need new programs and approaches to meet the Governor's target and help ensure water supply reliability. That is why the Governor has directed state agencies to develop this more aggressive plan and implement it. The CA Public Utilities Commission is currently conducting several water conservation/efficiency pilots to determine associated energy savings pairing water and energy utilities' programs.

6. What state agencies are involved in developing the new plan?

Several state agencies play a role in water management and will help develop the plan, including the Department of Water Resources, the State Water Resources Control Board, the California Energy Commission, the Department of Public Health and the California Public Utilities Commission. The Bureau of Reclamation, a federal agency, is also participating on the team as is the California Urban Water Conservation Council.

7. Will there be opportunity for others to provide input?

Yes. California's successful conservation programs are the product of good ideas from many sources including local agencies, individuals, public interest groups, and others. Public input will be essential to development of the best possible plan. Several opportunities for public interaction are planned for the summer and fall, 2008. The first will be as part of the CA Water Plan Update 2009 All Regions Forum in San Jose on June 2, 2008.

8. When will the plan be completed?

The agencies intend to work quickly and complete the plan by the end of 2008. There will be several opportunities for public input this summer as well as a chance to review the draft report in early fall, 2008.

9. What are some of the initial tasks the agencies will tackle?

The agencies are focusing on key questions such as: What does "per capita" refer to, all water use, urban and agriculture or is it urban only? If only urban use, what is the plan for agricultural conservation? If only urban use, what components are included, residential, industrial, institutional, etc.? How should the reduction in use be applied, at each connection, by supplier, by region or statewide?

Another task that is underway is the gathering of baseline information to measure progress towards the 20% reduction. For example the agencies are collecting data on California's current population and water use in each of California's 10 hydrologic regions as well as future populations and water use in those regions during 2010, 2015 and 2020.

10. What if we don't meet the goal?

The Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta, often described as the hub of California's water systems, is in crisis. Ecosystem restoration and new water infrastructure will take a long time to implement. Until these improvements are in place, water supplies from the Delta will not be reliable and the health of the Delta will be in jeopardy. Aggressive planned improvements in water use efficiency are preferable to adverse impacts to the Delta ecosystem and unexpected shortages due to drought, levee failure, sea level rise or salt intrusion.

11. Where can I get more information?

Many sources of information are available on the internet. Here are some useful links:

- Department of Water Resources <http://www.water.ca.gov/>
- State Water Resources Control Board <http://www.swrcb.ca.gov/>
- California Energy Commission <http://www.energy.ca.gov/>
- California Public Utilities Commission <http://www.cpuc.ca.gov/puc/>
- California Department of Public Health <http://www.cdph.ca.gov/>
- US Bureau of Reclamation, Mid-Pacific Region <http://www.usbr.gov/mp/>
- California Urban Water Conservation Council <http://www.cuwcc.org/home.html>
- AB 1420 http://www.cuwcc.org/Uploads/committee/ab1420_bill_07-04-18.pdf
- California Water Plan Update <http://www.waterplan.water.ca.gov/>
- Model Water Efficient Landscape Ordinance
<http://www.owue.water.ca.gov/landscape/ord/ord.cfm>
- California Irrigation Management Information System
<http://www.cimis.water.ca.gov/cimis/welcome.jsp>
- CALFED *Water Use Efficiency Comprehensive Evaluation*
http://calwater.ca.gov/calfed/library/library_archive_WUE.html