



# Media Release

## State Water Board Adopts 25 Percent Mandatory Water Conservation Regulation

For Immediate Release  
May 5, 2015

Contact: George Kostyrko  
gkostyrko@waterboards.ca.gov

**SACRAMENTO** – With emergency drought conditions persisting throughout California, the State Water Resources Control Board Tuesday adopted an [emergency regulation](#) requiring an immediate 25 percent reduction in overall potable urban water use statewide in accordance with Gov. Jerry Brown’s April 1 [Executive Order](#).

The Governor’s Executive Order required, for the first time in the state’s history, mandatory conservation for all residents and directed several state agencies, including the State Water Board, to take immediate action to safeguard the state’s remaining potable urban water supplies in preparation for a possible fifth year of drought.

A 25 percent savings in potable urban water use amounts to more than 1.2 million acre-feet of water over the next nine months, or nearly as much water as is currently in Lake Oroville.

Tuesday’s action follows the release of water production figures for the month of March which registered only a slight increase from the amount of water saved in the prior month. The amount of water conserved in March 2015, as compared to March 2013 was 3.6 percent, up less than one percent from February’s results.

Since the State Water Board adopted its initial emergency urban conservation regulation in July 2014, voluntary statewide conservation efforts have reached 9 percent overall – far short of the 20 percent Governor Brown called for in 2014. To see how various regions and communities have done conserving water, please visit this link [here](#).

“This is the drought of the century, with greater impact than anything our parents and grandparents experienced, and we have to act accordingly,” said Felicia Marcus, Chair of the State Water Resources Control Board.

“Today we set a high but achievable bar, with the goal of stretching urban California’s water supply. We have to face the reality that this drought may continue and prepare as if that’s the case. If it rains and snows next winter, we celebrate. If the drought continues, we’ll be glad we took difficult but prudent action today. It’s the responsible thing to do.”



## Conservation Standard

The emergency regulation identifies how much water communities must conserve based on their average residential water use, per person per day, last summer. Every person should be able keep indoor water use to no more than 55 gallons per day. For the most part, the amount of water that each person uses in excess of this amount is water that is applied to lawns and other ornamental landscapes.

On average, 50 percent of total residential use is outdoors, in some cases up to 80 percent. To save water now, during this drought emergency, the regulation targets these outdoor uses. Communities that are approaching, at or below the indoor target, are assigned a modest conservation standard while communities that use water well above the indoor target will be asked to do much more.

To reduce water use by 25 percent statewide, the regulation adopted by the Board this week places each urban water supplier into one of eight tiers which are assigned a conservation standard, ranging between four percent and 36 percent. Each month, the State Water Board will compare every urban water suppliers' water use with their use for the same month in 2013 to determine if they are on track for meeting their conservation standard. Local water agencies will determine the most cost effective and locally appropriate way to achieve their standard. The State Water Board will be working closely with water suppliers to implement the regulations and improve local efforts that are falling short.

“This likely will result in all communities significantly cutting back on outdoor watering, particularly ornamental landscapes surrounding homes, institutions, and businesses, resulting in many golden landscapes statewide,” said Marcus. “This will be a heavy lift for some, but we believe that the regulatory strategy adopted today is doable – in fact, many communities that have focused on conserving water have already achieved significant conservation without losing their landscapes.”

Residential customers of water suppliers with a conservation standard of 36 percent currently use between 216 and 614 gallons of water per person per day during the months of July, August, and September. Reducing their water use by 36 percent will still leave these residents with a minimum of 137 and up to 393 gallons of water per person per day; far more than the accepted standard of 55 gallons per person per day for indoor use. The difference between 55 gallons per person per day and 137 – 393 gallons per person per day means that these residents will still have water available for outdoor irrigation. Communities using less than 65 gallons per person per day will be required to reduce their overall water use by 8 percent.

“Over the longer term, we have many ways to extend our precious water resources, particularly in urban areas — conservation, recycling, stormwater capture, and desalination in appropriate cases have great promise. Many communities have done a lot already, or have ambitious goals that we hope to help them achieve. In the short run however, conservation is the cheapest, fastest and smartest way to become more resilient in the face of drought today and climate change in the future,” said Marcus.

## Summary of New Requirements

- The conservation savings for all urban water suppliers (serving more than 3,000 connections) are allocated across nine tiers of increasing levels of residential gallons per capita per day (R-GPCD) water use to reduce water use by 25 percent statewide and will take effect June 1st. For specific information on the tiers and the suppliers in each tier, please visit [here](#).
- Smaller water suppliers (serving fewer than 3,000 connections) must either reduce water use by 25 percent, or restrict outdoor irrigation to no more than two days per week. These smaller urban suppliers, that collectively serve less than 10 percent of Californians, must submit a report on December 15, 2015 to demonstrate compliance.
- Commercial, Industrial and Institutional properties that are not served by a water supplier (or are self-supplied, such as by a groundwater well) also must either reduce water use by 25 percent or restrict outdoor irrigation to no more than two days per week. No reporting is required but these properties must maintain documentation of their water use and practices.
- The new prohibitions in the Executive Order apply to all Californians and will take effect immediately upon approval of the regulation by the Office of Administrative Law. These include:
  - Irrigation with potable water of ornamental turf on public street medians; and
  - Irrigation with potable water outside of newly constructed homes and buildings not in accordance with emergency regulations or other requirements established by the Building Standards Commission and the Department of Housing and Community Development.
- These are in addition to the existing restrictions that prohibit:
  - Using potable water to wash sidewalks and driveways;
  - Allowing runoff when irrigating with potable water;
  - Using hoses with no automatic shutoff nozzles to wash cars;
  - Using potable water in decorative water features that do not recirculate the water;
  - Irrigating outdoors during and within 48 hours following measureable rainfall; and
  - Restaurants serving water to their customers unless the customer requests it.
- Additionally, hotels and motels must offer their guests the option to not have their linens and towels laundered daily and prominently display this option in each guest room.

## **Enforcement**

In addition to other powers, local agencies can fine property owners up to \$500 a day for failure to implement the water use prohibitions and restrictions. The State Water Board can issue informational orders, conservation orders or cease and desist orders to water suppliers for failure to meet their conservation standard. Water agencies that violate cease and desist orders are subject to a civil liability of up to \$10,000 a day.

## **Next Steps**

Following Board adoption, the regulation will be submitted to the Office of Administrative Law, which has 10 days to approve or deny the regulation. If approved by the Office of Administrative Law, the regulation will take effect immediately and remain in effect for 270 days from that date.

For more information, please visit the [Emergency Water Conservation](#) website.

To learn more about the state's drought response, visit [Drought.CA.Gov](#).

Every Californian should take steps to conserve water. Find out how at [SaveOurWater.com](#).