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Office of Governor
Edmund G. Brown Jr.

Governor Brown Issues Order to Continue Water Savings as Drought Persists

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Executive Order Aims to Make Water Conservation a Way of Life in California

SACRAMENTO – Moving to bolster California’s climate and drought resilience, Governor Edmund G. Brown Jr. today issued an executive order that builds on temporary statewide emergency water restrictions to establish longer-term water conservation measures, including permanent monthly water use reporting, new permanent water use standards in California communities and bans on clearly wasteful practices such as hosing off sidewalks, driveways and other hardscapes.

“Californians stepped up during this drought and saved more water than ever before,” said Governor Brown. “But now we know that drought is becoming a regular occurrence and water conservation must be a part of our everyday life.”

Californians have responded to the call to conserve water during the drought by dialing back sprinklers, replacing lawns, fixing leaky faucets and installing more efficient toilets and washing machines. Between June 2015 and March 2016, Californians reduced water use by 23.9 percent compared with the same months in 2013 – saving enough water to provide 6.5 million Californians with water for one year.

While the severity of the drought has lessened in some parts of California after winter rains and snow, the current drought is not over. For the fifth consecutive year, dry conditions persist in many areas of the state, with limited drinking water supplies in some communities, diminished water for agricultural production and environmental habitat, and severely depleted groundwater basins. The executive order calls for long-term improvements to local drought preparation across the state, and directs the State Water Resources Control Board to develop proposed emergency water restrictions for 2017 if the drought persists.

California droughts are expected to be more frequent and persistent, as warmer winter temperatures driven by climate change reduce water held in the Sierra Nevada snowpack and result in drier soil conditions. Recognizing these new conditions, the executive order directs permanent changes to use water more wisely and efficiently, and prepare for more frequent, persistent periods of limited supply.

These new actions will help achieve a top priority in the Governor’s [Water Action Plan](#) – to “Make Conservation a California Way of Life.” The administration will seek public input in the coming months on new water conservation and efficiency standards called for in this executive order.

The following is a summary of the executive order issued by the Governor today:

Use Water More Wisely

The Department of Water Resources (DWR) and the State Water Board will require monthly reporting by urban water suppliers on a permanent basis. This includes information regarding water use, conservation and enforcement. Through a public process and working with partners such as urban water suppliers, local governments and environmental groups, DWR and the State Water Board will develop new water use efficiency targets as part of a long-term conservation framework for urban water agencies. These targets go beyond the 20 percent reduction in per capita urban water use by 2020 that was embodied in SB X7-7 of 2009, and will be customized to fit the unique conditions of each water supplier.

The State Water Board will adjust emergency water conservation regulations through the end of January 2017, in recognition of the differing water supply conditions across the state, and develop proposed emergency water restrictions for 2017 if the drought persists.

Eliminate Water Waste

The State Water Board will permanently prohibit wasteful practices, such as hosing off sidewalks, driveways and other hardscapes, washing automobiles with hoses not equipped with a shut-off nozzle, and watering lawns in a manner that causes runoff. These temporary prohibitions have been in place since emergency water conservation efforts began in July 2014.

The State Water Board and DWR will take actions to minimize water system leaks across the state that continue to waste large amounts of water. DWR estimates that leaks in water district distribution systems siphon away more than 700,000 acre-feet of water a year in California – enough to supply 1.4 million homes for a year. Audits of water utilities have found an average loss through leaks of 10 percent of their total supply.

Strengthen Local Drought Resilience

In consultation with urban water suppliers, local governments, environmental groups and other partners, DWR will strengthen standards for local Water Shortage Contingency Plans, which are part of the Urban Water Management Plans that water districts must submit every five years. Under new strengthened standards, districts must plan for droughts lasting at least five years, as well as more frequent and severe periods of drought. These plans must be actionable, so that districts can turn to them to guide their drought response.

For areas not covered by the Water Shortage Contingency Plan, DWR will work with counties to improve drought planning for small water suppliers and rural communities.

Improve Agricultural Water Use Efficiency and Drought Planning

DWR will update existing requirements for Agricultural Water Management Plans so that irrigation districts quantify their customers' water use efficiency and plan for water supply shortages.

Current law requires agricultural water districts serving 25,000 acres or more to file such plans. The executive order increases the number of irrigation districts who must file water management plans by lowering the threshold to irrigation district serving 10,000 acres or more. DWR will check the plans to ensure they quantify conservation efforts and adequately plan for water shortages.

DWR will work with the California Department of Food and Agriculture in seeking public input on the updated standards, with a public draft made available by the end of this year.

To ensure compliance with these new targets and water management plan requirements, DWR, the State Water Board and the California Public Utilities Commission will work together to develop methods which could include technical and financial assistance, regulatory oversight and enforcement mechanisms.

The full text of the executive order can be found [here](#).

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](#).

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