

# Overview of State's Water Conservation Efforts

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LEGISLATIVE ANALYST'S OFFICE

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On Resources and Transportation  
Hon. Richard Bloom, Chair





## Key Statewide Water Conservation Efforts in California

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### Water Conservation Act of 2009 Set Statewide Water Use Reduction Goal

- Chapter 4 of 2009 (SB7X 7, Steinberg) mandated a 10 percent reduction in per capita urban water use by 2015, and a 20 percent reduction by 2020.
- State agencies developed the *20 x 2020 Plan* to guide progress towards that goal. Water agencies were required to develop usage targets in their urban water management plans, using one of four allowable methodologies.

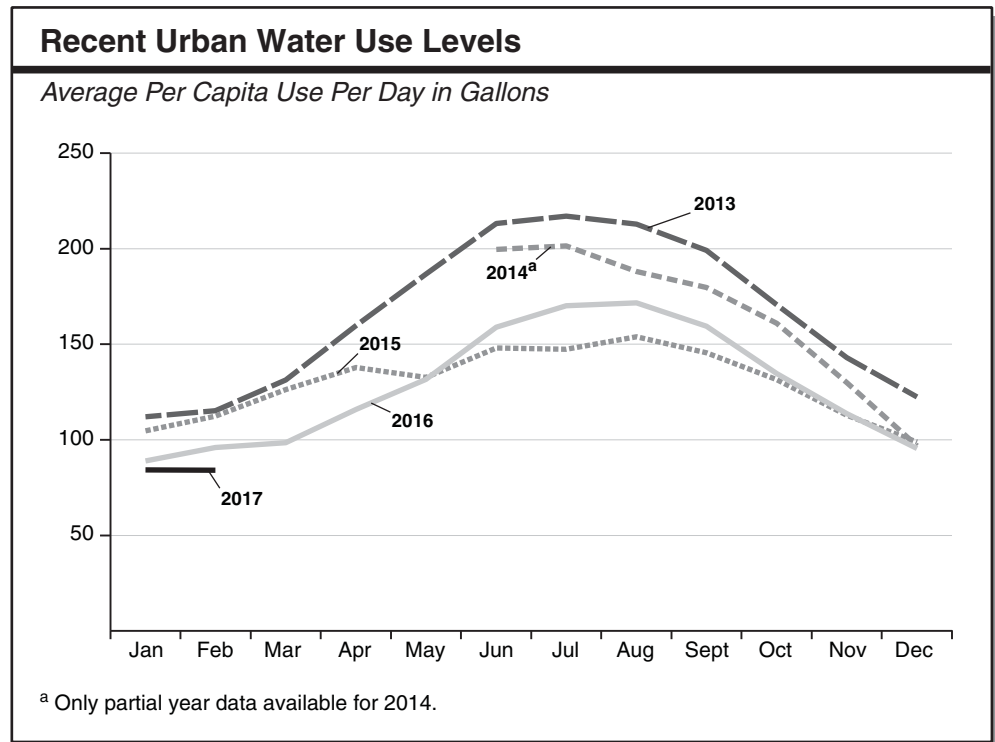


### Recent Drought Led State to Impose Mandatory Urban Usage Reductions

- In 2014, Governor's emergency drought proclamation called for a 20 percent *voluntary* reduction in urban water usage compared to 2013 pre-drought levels.
- In 2015, Governor's executive order *required* a 25 percent statewide reduction in potable urban water use compared to 2013 levels. State Water Resources Control Board (SWRCB) established temporary water conservation standards for water agencies ranging from 4 percent to 36 percent depending on previous usage.
- In 2016, SWRCB modified requirements, allowing agencies to establish local conservation standards if they could self-certify they had adequate supplies to withstand a "stress test" of three additional years of drought.
- SWRCB also passed emergency regulations (1) requiring monthly reporting of urban water use and (2) prohibiting certain water use, including hosing-down sidewalks and running sprinklers during rainstorms.



## Summary of Urban Water Use Rates



### Urban Water Usage Rates Currently Below 20 x 2020 Targets

- *20 x 2020 Plan* established statewide target of 179 gallons per capita per day (GPCD) by 2015 and 159 GPCD by 2020. (The 2005 baseline was 199 GPCD.)
- In 2015, statewide usage rates averaged 133 GPCD.



## Administration Recently Released Plan for Ongoing Conservation Efforts

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### **Governor's 2016 Executive Order Directed Agencies to Develop Long-Term Statewide Conservation Plan**

- *Making Water Conservation a California Way of Life* report finalized in April 2017.



### **Would Enact Certain Components Through Existing Authority**

- Changes to be implemented through regulations include (1) making monthly water use reporting requirements and prohibitions on certain wasteful practices permanent, (2) reducing water supplier leaks and water losses, and (3) certifying innovative technologies for water conservation and energy efficiency.



### **Proposes Budget Trailer Bill Language to Authorize Other Changes**

- ***New Urban Water Use Standards.*** Requires SWRCB to adopt (1) regulations establishing new long-term efficiency standards by May 2021 and (2) emergency regulations establishing interim standards before then. Specific targets would be set at the local level.
- ***New Urban Water Plan Requirements.*** Adds new requirements to urban water management plans, including a risk assessment for droughts lasting five or more years, a water shortage contingency plan, and an annual water budget forecast.
- ***New Agricultural Water Plan Requirements.*** Adds new requirements to agricultural water management plans, including a drought plan and annual water budget. Also expands reporting requirements to suppliers providing water to between 10,000 and 25,000 irrigated acres. (Previous threshold was 25,000 acres.)



## Several Water Conservation Bills Currently Being Considered by Legislature

### Water Conservation Legislation Passed by Assembly Committee on Water, Parks, and Wildlife

*April 25, 2017 Hearing*

Bill number	Author	Version Date	Description
AB 869	Rubio	3/28/2017	Exempts recycled water from conservation requirements under all conditions.
AB 968	Rubio	4/17/2017	Requires new 2025 water use efficiency targets for urban water suppliers. Provides options for the targets, protects water rights, and exempts recycled water.
AB 1000	Friedman	2/16/2017	Requires CEC to certify innovative water conservation and water loss detection and control technologies.
AB 1323	Weber	2/17/2017	Requires DWR to convene a stakeholder workgroup to develop proposals for new long-term water use targets.
AB 1654	Rubio	3/28/2017	Requires new drought shortage response procedures in urban water management plans. Defines emergency supply, and protects water suppliers that comply with the plans from any state action in times of drought.
AB 1667	Friedman	4/18/2017	Requires all agricultural water suppliers report water budgets, have drought plans, and expands efficient water management practices.
AB 1668	Friedman	4/18/2017	Requires new drought shortage response with detailed levels of response. Incorporates climate change, enhances water supply analysis, and strengthens the enforceability of urban water management plans and drought response plans.
AB 1669	Friedman	4/18/2017	Authorizes and requires SWRCB to adopt long-term water use efficiency standards.

Source: Assembly Committee on Water, Parks, and Wildlife staff.

CEC = California Energy Commission; DWR = Department of Water Resources; and SWRCB = State Water Resources Control Board.



## Several Key Questions for Legislature to Consider

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- What Are the Water Conservation Goals the State Is Trying to Accomplish?**
- How Should Targets Be Structured to Accomplish Those Goals?**
  - How should targets account for regional variation?
  - How should progress towards achieving those goals be measured?
  - To what extent could other tools or approaches be employed to encourage efficient water use?
- What Role Does the Legislature Want to Play in Developing and Overseeing Water Conservation Policies?**
  - Which policies should be adopted through legislation and which through regulations?
  - Which decisions should be determined through state policies and which left to local discretion?
- How Can the State Ensure That Efficiencies in Water Use Are Sustainable?**
  - What objectives, practices, and policies can realistically be maintained for the long term?
- How Should Potential Uncertainties Be Incorporated Into Water Use Planning?**
  - How should water use standards incorporate long-term hydrological forecasts and climate change?



## Several Key Questions for Legislature to Consider

*(Continued)*

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### **How Should Alternative Sources of Water Fit Into the State's Overall Water Conservation Approach?**

- How should the state coordinate policies governing new water infrastructure development—such as recycled water and desalination—and water efficiency to achieve its overall water management goals?