



## How California Can Best Improve Drought Preparedness and Increase Water Use Efficiency

# ABOUT

## The Administration's Proposal to Give State Regulators Permanent Target-Setting Authority Over Local Water Use

Local water suppliers throughout the State support many of the goals and recommendations set forth in the Administration's framework for long-term water use, such as the need for improved drought contingency planning, continued water waste prohibitions and an increased emphasis on enhancing long-term water use efficiency.

But local water suppliers are strongly opposed to the major thrust of the Administration's proposal: to give the State Water Resources Control Board (State Water Board) unprecedented and unchecked power to mandate water use reductions through uniform statewide conservation standards that can supersede unique local conditions, erode local control, and undermine the State's long-established water rights system

### THERE ARE NUMEROUS REASONS WHY THE ADMINISTRATION'S PROPOSAL IS DRAWING OPPOSITION FROM THROUGHOUT THE STATE

- It makes it clear that the State Water Board wants to make water use reductions increasingly more stringent without any legislative oversight or local input.
- It focuses solely on mandating statewide reductions in water use through more stringent conservation targets, while ignoring the need for the State to pursue and implement a diverse, comprehensive portfolio of investments to improve security and reliability, as called for in the Governor's own Water Action Plan.
- It perpetuates the myth that making water rationing a permanent way of life makes communities more resilient to drought conditions. The reality is that the past actions of local water suppliers – investments in drought resilient supplies and long-term improvements in water efficiency – rather than State-mandated conservation, allowed California to weather the recent drought.

### LOCAL WATER SUPPLIERS OPPOSE THE ADMINISTRATION'S PROPOSAL AND FAVOR A MORE BALANCED APPROACH THAT:

- preserves the state Legislature's oversight and control over long-term water use target setting
- builds on past success by maintaining multiple options to set efficiency targets instead of a one-size-fits-all approach for water use reduction
- enhances requirements for local planning and response to drought, as currently proposed in Assembly Bill 1654 (Rubio) and supported by more than 100 organizations
- requires annual reporting so the State's response to drought can be targeted at the specific areas requiring assistance
- encourages further capital investments at the local level to increase supplies, efficiency, and resiliency to drought, including promoting recycled water, storm water capture, desalination and conjunctive use

Forcing water suppliers to ration water even when local supplies are adequate and secure, the Administration's proposal would negatively affect local economies, business development opportunities and the quality of life enjoyed by residents in our diverse communities. Projected impacts include the following:



### INCREASED RATES

The proposed method for setting water use targets is data-intensive, largely untested and will result in expensive cost burdens to water suppliers and ultimately ratepayers. As occurred during the drought, water providers will face increased costs to implement the Administration's complex top-down plan. Moreover, as water sales are reduced to comply with State-mandated conservation targets, the unit cost of water will have to increase to cover the fixed costs of water suppliers.



### FEWER GREEN SPACES

In California, most household water use goes toward watering landscapes. To meet stringent State conservation targets, some reductions will be made inside homes and businesses, but most will come from reducing the water used on landscapes. Green spaces in residential areas, parks and business developments will become increasingly scarce, affecting community aesthetics and quality of life. In fact, the State Water Board's top staffer on water conservation has placed "the elimination of irrigated turf in ornamental landscapes" on his Top 10 wish list for California in the next decade.



### HARM TO BUSINESS

The Administration's draft framework, released in November 2016, proposed working with the business community to develop a process for reducing water use over time while avoiding adverse economic impacts. The Administration's proposal calls for water use standards affecting commercial, institutional and industrial water users without creating the necessary stakeholder process.



### DAMAGE TO URBAN FORESTS

Water conservation mandates during the drought emergency inadvertently resulted in the loss of large numbers of mature trees in urban areas throughout the State, along with the environmental benefits they provide. The proposed permanent conservation targets could exacerbate this problem.

Local water suppliers, business and other groups support the objectives of better drought preparedness and improved water use efficiency while minimizing the negative impacts. They support building on the foundation created by SB x7-7 and the State's Urban Water Management Planning Act, which have been proven to be successful during many years of implementation.

The California Water Action Plan acknowledges there is no "silver bullet" when it comes to managing California's water resources. Conserving water alone cannot provide for future economic and population growth, respond to climate change, or protect the environment. A diverse portfolio approach is required, which includes investments in water storage, recycling, desalination and conjunctive use, in addition to using water more efficiently.