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Water conservation plan proposed

By [Dawn Hodson](#) [From page A2](#) | December 05, 2016

State agencies released a draft plan Nov. 30 that, if adopted, will make water conservation a mandatory part of life.

“Californians rose to the challenge during this historic drought and recognized that conservation is critical in the face of an uncertain future. This plan is about harnessing the creativity and innovation that Californians have shown during the driest years in state history and making water conservation a way of life in the years ahead,” said California Department of Water Resources Director Mark W. Cowin. “This plan will help make permanent changes to water use so California is better prepared for whatever the future brings.”

State Water Resource Control Board officials state that 75 percent of the state remains in severe drought. Relying on a new report from UCLA, the board is also projecting the Sierra Nevada snowpack, one of California’s largest sources of water supply, is likely to drop 50 percent by the end of the century.

The draft plan proposes to shift from statewide mandates to a set of conservation standards applied based on local circumstances, including population, temperature, leaks and types of commercial and industrial use. For example, communities in hotter and drier climate zones will receive irrigation allowances that reflect evaporation levels.

Water suppliers would be allowed to use various strategies to meet their new water use targets with the draft plan pertaining to the water supplier overall, not individual customer water-use budgets or targets.

Key water conservation efforts included in the plan are: a permanent ban on wasteful practices such as hosing driveways and excessively watering lawns; providing technical assistance and financial incentives for water suppliers to implement leak prevention, detection and repair programs; collecting information about innovative water conservation and water loss detection and control technologies; requiring agricultural water suppliers to quantify water use in their service areas and describe measures to increase water use efficiency; full compliance with water use targets for urban water suppliers by 2025; and planning and preparing for continued and future drought and water shortages.

Some of the actions described in the draft plan require working with the Legislature on new and expanded state authority, while others can be implemented under existing authority.

The state is already projecting that most of California potentially faces a sixth year of drought. As a result, the State Water Board will also consider whether it must extend its existing emergency water conservation regulations. The board has already taken action to maintain mandatory reductions in communities that could not verify they have enough water supplies to withstand three more years of severe drought.

The state is encouraging the public to submit comments on the draft plan, which can be found at waterboards.ca.gov/water-issues/programs/conservation_portal/emergency_regulation.shtml. Comments should be submitted to wue@water.ca.gov.