



Media Release

State Water Board Releases Statewide “Stress Test” Data Informational Orders Issued to Water Suppliers With Inadequate “Stress Test” Submissions

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Contact: George Kostyrko
george.kostyrko@waterboards.ca.gov

SACRAMENTO – The State Water Resources Control Board today posted “stress tests” submitted by water suppliers to demonstrate whether they have adequate supplies to withstand three additional dry years. Water suppliers that pass their “stress test” will not face a state-mandated conservation standard through January 2017, but are expected to keep conserving water to build long-term drought resilience.

“We created the ‘stress tests’ so that local agencies could demonstrate their ability to supply water under extended drought conditions, so we could step back from our unprecedented 25 percent water conservation mandate with some confidence,” said State Water Board Chair Felicia Marcus. “Demonstrating adequate preparation for drought through developing supplies like local storage, recycling, groundwater banking and other means is great. Sharing that information with customers in an accessible way is also a critical piece of developing consumer comfort and confidence. Being prepared, however, is not a license to abandon conservation, because one thing we know is we can’t know what next year or the next will bring.”

In addition to releasing the “stress test” data, the State Water Board issued nine Informational Orders to water suppliers whose “stress test” submissions were incomplete or inadequate. The nine suppliers that received Informational Orders have 30 days to provide additional documentation, and failure to comply could result in a return to a supplier’s March 2016 conservation standard, monetary penalties, or both.

Of the 379 suppliers that submitted “stress tests,” 36 indicated that they would face a supply shortage in 2019 and will be required to meet a conservation standard equal to the shortage amount. Thirty-two suppliers did not submit “stress tests” and will retain their March 2016 conservation standards through January 2017.

A significant purpose of the stress test was to give the public a picture of the water supplies their water agency was relying on. Because many “stress test” submissions were incomplete, unclear, or appeared to not follow instructions properly as originally submitted, State Water Board staff has spent significant time engaging with water suppliers to make their analysis more clear and complete. However, the staff did not independently research and verify the accuracy of the submissions.



Going forward, the State Water Board will investigate allegations that “stress test” submittals are inaccurate. The Board reserves the right to reject submissions found to be significantly erroneous or misleading. The State Water Board will also closely monitor conservation levels through the end of the year and will prepare a proposal to return to state-mandated conservation levels in February 2017 if drought conditions persist and statewide conservation levels falter significantly.

“Last year, with the lowest snowpack in 500 years after three terrible drought years, and less than impressive response to our earlier calls for conservation, we needed to step in and mandate specific conservation targets to prepare in case we had yet another record bad year in a row,” said Chair Marcus. “Thankfully, this year we received a modest reprieve, and saw improved water supplies for most urban areas. Just as important, we also saw that agencies and the public had stepped up to accomplish impressive conservation.

“So, we’ve stepped back and let local communities step back in to take responsibility for maintaining adequate conservation levels -- if they can demonstrate adequate supply. We commend the many water suppliers that passed their stress tests who also have stepped up to demonstrate a strong commitment to continued conservation, just as we are concerned about those who are trumpeting preparation or supply and intentionally or unintentionally sending an anti-conservation message.”

According to State Water Board analysis, water suppliers such as the city of Sacramento, which submitted a well-documented “stress test” and elected to maintain restrictions on outdoor irrigation, deserve credit for showing leadership. Other water suppliers, such as the city of Burbank, which saved 27.8 percent in June, and the Dublin-San Ramon Services District, which saved 32.5 percent, have continued promoting conservation and expanded public access to recycled water for irrigation.

In addition, the East Bay Municipal Utility District, San Jose Water Company, Yuba City, Beverly Hills, Lemoore, and Eastern Municipal water districts, and many others submitted A-grade stress tests and also kept conservation levels high. The State Water Board has required continued reporting of conservation results and will monitor the results, while being prepared to step back in with mandatory targets if necessary depending upon water supply conditions and water conservation levels.

In addition to monitoring conservation levels, the State Water Board is working closely with the Department of Water Resources and other state agencies to develop long-term water use efficiency standards, as directed by Executive Order B-37-16, which will be applicable across California. These new standards will provide for improved water conservation and efficiency in the years ahead based on climate, population, and business types, rather than percentage reductions off a given baseline. The new standards will also include permanent prohibitions on wasteful water use, improved drought planning, and enhanced leak detection and repair requirements.

The adopted regulation also keeps in place the specific prohibitions against certain water uses. Those prohibitions include watering down a sidewalk with a hose instead of using a broom or a brush, or overwatering a landscape to where water is running off the lawn, over a sidewalk and into the gutter. Prohibitions directed to the hospitality industry also remain in place.

Prohibitions against [homeowners associations](#) taking action against homeowners during a declared drought remain as well. State Water Board staff will be following up with urban water suppliers who have certified a three-year supply to ensure that local enforcement of the prohibitions is being reported in the monthly water data each urban water supplier sends showing how much water is delivered to customers every month.

More information on the Board action today can be found [here](#).

Background

In his April 1, 2015 [Executive Order](#), in light of the worst snowpack in 500 years, Gov. Edmund G. Brown Jr. mandated a 25 percent water use reduction by users of urban water supplies across California. In May 2015, the State Water Board adopted an emergency regulation requiring a 25 percent reduction in overall potable urban water use statewide from June 2015 through February 2016.

On Feb. 2, 2016, based on Gov. Brown's [November 2015 Executive Order](#), the State Water Board approved an updated and extended emergency regulation. The extended regulation responded to calls for continuing the conservation structure that had spurred such dramatic savings while providing greater consideration of some factors that influence water use: climate, population growth and significant investments in new local, drought-resilient water supplies such as wastewater reuse and desalination.

On May 9, 2016, Governor Edmund G. Brown Jr. issued [Executive Order B-37-16](#), requiring the Board to adjust its emergency water conservation regulation through the end of January 2017 in recognition of improved urban water supply conditions across the state and, separately, take action to make some of the requirements of the regulation permanent. The Board [adopted the revised regulation](#) on May 18. June was the first month under the revised regulation.

Since June 2014, the State Water Board has been tracking water conservation for each of the state's larger urban water suppliers (those with more than 3,000 connections) on a monthly basis. Compliance with individual water supplier conservation requirements is based on cumulative savings. Cumulative tracking means that conservation savings will be added together from one month to the next and compared to the amount of water used during the same months in 2013.

California has been dealing with the effects of an unprecedented drought. To learn about all the actions the state has taken to manage our water system and cope with the impacts of the drought, visit [Drought.CA.Gov](#). Every Californian should take steps to conserve water. Find out how at [SaveOurWater.com](#). While saving water, it is important to properly water trees. Find out how at [www.saveourwater.com/trees](#). In addition to many effective local programs, state-funded turf removal and toilet replacement rebates are also available. Information and rebate applications can be found at: [www.saveourwaterrebates.com/](#).

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