

State Water Resources Control Board

January 17, 2014

NOTICE OF SURFACE WATER SHORTAGE AND POTENTIAL FOR CURTAILMENT OF WATER RIGHT DIVERSIONS

With California facing water shortfalls in the driest year in recorded state history, Governor Edmund G. Brown Jr. has proclaimed a State of Emergency and directed state officials to take all necessary actions to prepare for these drought conditions.

The State Water Resources Control Board (State Water Board) administers California's water rights system and is closely monitoring water availability. The water rights system is designed to provide for the orderly allocation of water supplies in the event that there is not enough water to satisfy everyone's needs. In the coming weeks and months, if dry weather conditions persist, the State Water Board will notify water right holders in critically dry watersheds of the requirement to limit or stop diversions of water under their water right, based on their priority. The right to divert surface water in California is based on the type of right being claimed and when the right was initiated. In times of drought and limited supply, the most recent ("junior") right holder must be the first to discontinue use. Some riparian¹ and pre-1914² water right holders may also receive a notice to stop diverting water if their diversions are downstream of reservoirs releasing stored water and there is no natural flow available for diversion.

If you are in a water short area, you should be looking into alternative water supplies for your water needs. Alternative supplies include groundwater wells, purchased water supplies under contractual arrangements, and recycled wastewater. Water right holders are cautioned that groundwater resources are significantly depleted in some areas. Water right holders in these areas should make planting and other decisions accordingly.

We hope that significant precipitation occurs in the next few months and the need to curtail water diversions is unnecessary. However, this notice is to encourage you to plan ahead. Whether you are a water right holder or a residential or business customer of a water service provider, all of California's water users are urged to conserve and use water wisely.

For more information, go to: [Drought State of Emergency](#)
[State Water Board Drought Information](#)

¹ Riparian rights entitle the landowner to use a share of the water flowing past their property. While riparian rights require no permits or licenses, they apply only to the water that would naturally flow in the stream and they do not allow the user to divert water for storage or use it on parcels that are not adjacent to the stream or on land that is outside its watershed.

² An appropriative water right is one obtained for the use of water on non-riparian land, for diversion to storage, or otherwise beyond what can be done under a riparian right. An appropriative right claimed before 1914 is referred to as a "pre-1914 appropriative water right" and is not subject to permit or license requirements. Water right permits and licenses issued after 1914 by the State Water Board and its predecessors are referred to as "post-1914 appropriative water rights".