

CALIFORNIA STATE WATER BOARD WILL NOW REQUIRE MONTHLY USE REPORTING FROM URBAN RETAIL WATER SUPPLIERS

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The State Water Board **adopted a regulation this week** requiring the state's largest urban retail water suppliers to report their monthly water use. A similar emergency policy was adopted on a mandatory basis during the last statewide drought; however, since November 2017, reporting has been implemented on a voluntary basis. The regulation affects California's 400 largest water systems serving approximately 90% of the state's population.

The goal of collecting this data is to assist all concerned parties to track statewide and local water use. More data availability allows policy makers and water managers to quickly respond to a changing water supply and associated climate conditions.

The emergency regulations passed during the last drought led to a 22.5% drop in overall water use. (For perspective, this is enough water to supply over a third of the state for over a year.) Post-drought, Californians have largely continued this practice of decreased water use. In addition, most water systems have continued to voluntarily report their usage statistics even after the mandatory reporting period ended.

These new permanent reporting requirements build on a larger plan to prepare the state for future droughts. This plan seeks to improve water resiliency, emphasizing efficiency and stretching existing water supplies in cities and on farms. Efficiency is the most cost-effective way to achieve long term conservation goals. The permanent regulation will be reviewed by the state's Office of Administrative Law and will go into effect October 1, 2020.

Water Board officials see the gathering of water use data as crucial to managing the level of water use in California. The data encourage public awareness and understanding of water use and conservation efforts. They believe the last drought permanently changed the way Californians view their role in conserving water.