

Californians improve slightly on water-saving efforts

The Associated Press

SAN FRANCISCO

Californians did slightly better in November on conserving water during the drought, figures released Tuesday show.

Overall water consumption declined by 9.8 percent — about 15 billion gallons — in the month compared to the same period a year ago, according to a report by the state Water Resources Control Board that surveyed nearly 400 urban water agencies.

Water use typically drops in the fall and winter as rainy weather idles sprinklers. The northern part of the state saw bigger savings than the southern portion, mainly because it received more rain in November.

"People shouldn't rest on their laurels" because water consumption may rise again in warmer months, said Felicia Marcus, chairwoman of the state water board.

Gov. Jerry Brown has called on residents to cut use by 20 percent — a figure that has yet to be reached.

Since summer, more than 105 billion gallons of water have been saved compared to the period before. That's enough water to supply nearly 1.5 million Californians for a year, said Rafael Maestu, who helped author the report.

"For every month, we were using less water," he said. "Our water conservation efforts were actually working."

Residents around the Sacramento River posted the largest cut in water use in November, at 26 percent. Residents of south-east regions reduced use by just 1.2 percent.

State officials said 93 percent of water agencies had imposed restrictions on outdoor irrigation.

David Bolland of the Association of California Water Agencies told the state board that the latest figures were "heartening."

The average daily residential water use in November was 88.9 gallons per person, down from 123 gallons per person, per-day in September.

Water agencies are required to report the figures under emergency rules approved by the state board last summer. Those regulations also included mandatory outdoor water restrictions backed up with the threat of up to \$500 fines for violations.