

# How Jerry Brown made up his mind on drought order

By David Siders

One week before Gov. Jerry Brown strode into a bone dry meadow in the Sierra Nevada to issue the first statewide water reduction order in California history, he discussed the order at length with his advisers at the Capitol.

Brown knew he would order a 25 percent reduction of water use in urban areas, two administration officials said. But he waited to make the announcement for two reasons.

First, Brown had hoped storms in December and early February might avert the need for a mandatory water order. But it became the consensus of administration officials in March – when precipitation and voluntary conservation efforts fell short – that a mandatory order was necessary.

Brown and his advisers discussed the plan on March 25, then met late into the night on Friday and over the weekend.

In addition to poring over provisions of the order regarding local water agencies' responsibilities, Brown asked staff members to include a measure related to new technology.

The result, an administration official said, was part of the executive order labeled "Invest in New Technologies." It directs states agencies to implement a new program to "deploy innovative water management technologies for businesses, residents, industries, and agriculture."

The other reason Brown waited until Wednesday to announce the water reduction order was purely a matter of public relations.

Brown's office knew a snowpack survey in the Sierra Nevada, near Echo Summit, would produce staggering visuals: A dry meadow that, in normal years, is buried in snow.

By combining the executive order announcement with the snowpack survey, Brown hoped to maximize exposure.

"We knew we needed to get a lot of attention to make sure that people realized this was serious," one official said.

It worked. A bank of television cameras covered the event, broadcasting images around the world.

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