

What you need to know about the state's proposed water restrictions

By Matt
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The state water board has modified its proposed conservation regulations in an attempt to incorporate feedback from urban water suppliers, interest groups and members of the public who had roundly criticized its framework.

The board received more than 250 letters weighing in on how best to implement Gov. Jerry Brown's mandatory 25% statewide water-use cut. Some water suppliers said they should be given credit for past conservation. Others said aggressive water-use reductions could harm their bottom line or increase wildfire risk. A few said the targets set by the board were simply unattainable.

[A district-by-district look at the proposed drought restrictions](#)

The board addressed some — but not all — of those concerns in its latest draft regulations. Here's a look at the changes:

Will Californians still need to cut 25%?

Yes. In a call with reporters Saturday morning, Felicia Marcus, chairwoman of the state Water Resources Control Board, said meeting Brown's mandate was "definitely achievable."

However, the new draft regulations made slight changes to the tier system that will determine how much water each individual agency will be expected to save over the coming year.

How would the tier structure change?

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In a previous version of the framework, water regulators divided the state's more than 400 local water suppliers into four large groups. The amount they were required to cut varied: 10%, 20%, 25% or 35%.

Under the newest regulations, the board proposed grouping water districts into nine tiers. A very small number of agencies could individually apply to be in the first tier, which requires only a 4% cut in water use. But most of the state's water agencies will be required to cut usage between 8% and 36%. (Find your water agency [here](#).)

The change "lessens the disparities in reduction requirements between agencies that have similar levels of water consumption," the regulators said.

What does that mean for my water supplier?

It depends. The new proposal takes into account three months of residential water use data rather than one when assigning suppliers to tiers. Since there are more tiers, and suppliers were grouped based on expanded data, many agencies have new reduction targets.

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Under the new framework, Compton would need to cut its water use by only 8%, though it was previously told to cut 20%. The Los Angeles Department of Water and Power was originally required to cut 20%, but now would need to cut 16%.

Burbank and Sacramento would need to cut 28% rather than 25% under the new framework. And there are 94 water suppliers that, under the newest framework, would have to cut 36% — up from the previous maximum of 35%. Those suppliers include cities such as Arcadia, Merced and Bakersfield.

What does this mean for me?

You could face greater limits to outdoor watering. And you'll be encouraged to look for more ways to conserve indoors, too.

State regulators said they will start tracking compliance in July, when water suppliers submit water-use reports for the month of June. They said they will track suppliers' progress on a monthly basis and will assess their cumulative water savings. Regulators likened the process to a "bank account": Saving a lot of water one month would benefit a water supplier if it saved less a month later.

Local agencies who fall behind will face fines. To avoid those fines, cities and towns are likely to start cracking down on profligate water use by stiffening watering restrictions and issuing their own penalties to residents who don't comply.

People served by water suppliers that have already cut their prescribed amount may simply have to maintain the same level of conservation through the summer. But residents of places like Beverly Hills may have to drastically slash their water use in the coming hot months if the city is to avoid hefty penalties.

Could the regulations change again?

Yes. Anyone affected by the cuts can comment on the latest proposals until Wednesday. Water board staff will then use those comments to publish the final draft of the regulations on April 28. More public comment can be made at the May 5 water board meeting. The regulations are expected to be adopted that day or the day after.

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