



INFORMATION ITEM

Water Use Efficiency Standards and Reporting Requirements for Agricultural Use: Making Conservation a Way of Life

Summary: Staff from the State Water Resources Control Board (Water Board) will present on recent Water Board actions to implement AB 1668 (Friedman, Chapter 15, Statutes of 2018) and SB 606 (Hertzberg, Chapter 14, Statutes of 2018) legislation directing State agencies to develop a framework for long-term water conservation.

Background

The Water Conservation Act of 2009 (SB X7-7) required that all water suppliers increase water use efficiency. Improving “end-use” water efficiency is an important component of California’s 2020 Water Resilience Portfolio, which states that “the most cost-effective, environmentally beneficial way to stretch water supplies is through better water use efficiency and eliminating water waste.” (Water Resilience Portfolio, p. 18.) Portfolio action 2.1 directs the Department of Water Resources (DWR) and the Water Board to implement SB 606 (Hertzberg) and AB 1668 (Friedman), also known as the “Make Conservation A Way of Life” laws.

California’s 2020 Water Resilience Portfolio: https://waterresilience.ca.gov/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/Final_California-Water-Resilience-Portfolio-2020_ADA3_v2_ay11-opt.pdf

AB 1668 and SB 606 create new efficiency standards for residential use and reporting requirements for agricultural use and were enacted by the California Legislature in 2018 to further these and other water conservation objectives throughout the state. These laws focus on creating a long-term water conservation framework for California that meets four primary goals:

- Using water more wisely;
- Eliminating water waste;
- Strengthening local drought resilience; and
- Improving agricultural water use efficiency and drought planning.

In implementing AB 1668 and SB 606, DWR and the Water Board are working together to develop a framework of new standards for:

- Indoor residential water use;
- Outdoor residential water use;
- Commercial, industrial, and institutional (CII) water use for landscape irrigation with dedicated meters; and
- Water loss.

When these new standards are implemented, they will improve water use efficiency, monitoring, and reporting throughout the state.

Relationship to the Delta

The Delta Reform Act further defined the state's water policy priorities as they relate to the Delta, including express recognition that the Delta crisis cannot be resolved by taking action in the Delta alone. Given the interconnected nature of the Delta with the water use patterns of large parts of Northern, Central, and Southern California, the coequal goals of statewide water supply reliability and restored Delta ecosystem continue to fundamentally reshape California water management. Achieving these coequal goals is expected to be done, in significant part, through compliance with the Delta Reform Act's various mandates and goals relating to statewide water conservation, efficiency, and sustainable use, including the state's policy to reduce reliance on the Delta and related mandate to improve regional self-reliance.

Consequently, to achieve the statewide water supply mandates and the coequal goal of statewide water supply reliability, regions located inside and outside the Delta also must take action to increase water efficiency and develop sustainable local and regional sources of water, which will contribute to improved water supply reliability. Individual actions by water suppliers throughout the state are vital to success in this regard. The implementation of programs and projects that result in a significant reduction in the amount of water used, or in the percentage of water used, from the Delta watershed are foundational measures for assessing the state's progress in achieving these policies. The baseline for this evaluation is existing water use and supplies, as documented in the most recently adopted urban and agricultural water management plans.

To that end, in the Delta Plan WR R1 recommends that all water suppliers fully implement applicable water efficiency and water management laws, including urban water management plans (Water Code section 10610 et seq.); the 20 percent reduction in statewide urban per capita water use by 2020 (Water Code section 10608 et seq.); agricultural water management plans (Water Code section 10608 et seq. and 10800 et seq.); and other applicable water laws, regulations, or rules. Improving and tracking end-use efficiency is also an important consideration, as improvements in water use efficiency are identified in Delta Plan Policy WR P1(c)(2) as one of several programs or projects water suppliers can implement that reduce reliance on Delta water supplies.

The experience of two prolonged droughts in the last fifteen years, coupled with an ongoing expectation that changing climate conditions will only exacerbate such events in the future, reinforces the need to implement a comprehensive strategy that increases the diversity of regional water supply portfolios, creates more sustainably managed local water sources, and achieves greater water use efficiency. The development and implementation of long-term water conservation efforts, as required by AB 1668 and SB 606, will be vital in this regard.

Today's Meeting

At today's meeting, Charlotte Ely, a Supervising Senior Environmental Scientist from the Water Board, will provide an overview on how the Water Board and DWR are coordinating their activities to fulfill the statutory requirements and timelines set forth in AB 1668 and SB 606, and provide an update on these agencies' progress in developing urban water use objectives and urban monthly monitoring reporting.

Fiscal Information

Not applicable.

List of Attachments

None

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