



FAQs: Making Conservation a California Way of Life

What is the Making Conservation a California Way of Life regulation?

The Making Conservation a California Way of Life regulation is a state rule that sets new water conservation goals, while accounting for local factors such as population and climate.

In 2018, the California State Legislature passed Assembly Bill (AB) 1668 and Senate Bill (SB) 606, directing the State Water Board to adopt efficiency standards and also performance measures for commercial, industrial, and institutional water use. As part of the regulation, Urban Retail Water Suppliers – not individual households or businesses – will be held to annual “urban water use objectives.”

The goal of this regulation is to achieve long-term water use efficiency to help the state adapt to more extreme weather and future droughts. More extreme weather means a bigger swing between wet and dry conditions. Droughts are also predicted to be hotter and last longer, straining water supplies across California.

How much water does Desert Water Agency (DWA) need to cut and by when?

Initial data shared by the state indicates DWA needs to save 24% by 2025 and 32% by 2040. The state, however, still needs to provide some final data, which may change those numbers. The current information is that Desert Water Agency will need to use about 30-40% less water by 2040 to meet the water budget based on equations provided by the state. All urban water suppliers in California have their own unique water budgets. The rules go into effect January 1, 2025, but water suppliers have until 2027 to comply.

How does this regulation affect me?

The water budget, or water use objective, applies to Desert Water Agency as a water supplier, not to individual customers. However, we need our customers to continue to step up and [save water](#) to help us meet our water budget. For example, customers can participate in DWA conservation programs such as [incentives](#) or [walkthroughs](#). In the community, you can report water waste like excessive runoff or broken sprinklers. At home, you can simply be mindful of how often and long sprinklers and appliances run. We will be unable to meet our state mandated water budget without the community continuing to conserve.

Will water restrictions be imposed for customers?

DWA is not planning to implement mandatory water cuts for customers as part of the Making Conservation a California Way of Life regulation. Water use restrictions such as a prohibition on daylight watering, previously implemented during statewide drought, may still be implemented in response to future drought conditions. While a budget for DWA has been set, to achieve it we need all our customers to reduce unnecessary or wasteful water use. We will continue to encourage the community to be good stewards of our water resources before imposing additional enforcement on wasteful practices.

How will DWA achieve the water saving goals?

DWA already uses about 30% less water per customer than we did in 2013, and we believe the community can continue to rise to the challenge to conserve. DWA will keep encouraging participation in our incentive programs and conducting public outreach related to water conservation. The greater Palm Springs community is passionate and engaged and can help us meet this ambitious goal in the long term. Also, within the regulation, there are alternative compliance pathways and/or variances that DWA will apply for; if DWA qualifies, this means we will not need to save the full amount all at once.

What are the possible alternate pathways or variances that could help DWA meet the state's regulation?

In the regulation, water suppliers may take an alternative compliance pathway if they meet certain requirements. Based on DWA's anticipated reduction amount and our service area, which includes pockets of disadvantaged communities, the Agency should meet the qualifications necessary to apply for one of these alternative compliance pathways. Additionally, the regulation has variances that agencies can apply for that will provide a reduction to the overall conservation number. Variances include, for example, seasonal populations, evaporative coolers, new development, and trees.

What happens if the goals are not met?

Enforcement from the state could range from asking for more information on conservation programs to fines of up to \$10,000 a day during dry conditions. DWA plans to work with state partners to avoid fines and stay in compliance. The state is also going to take into account good faith efforts to reduce water use.

How are other water agencies across the state affected?

The regulation provides specific budgets to each water supplier so the impacts to each area will vary. Hot, dry, and inland climates across California generally need to save more than cooler coastal communities under this regulation. Due to differing local factors like climate and predominate type of landscaping (ex. desert vs. grass) some local agencies have smaller conservation goals by 2040.

Does the local aquifer affect the state regulation at all?

Our healthy and well-managed aquifer remains an asset that helps our region weather any short-term drought conditions. However, water supply and availability in the aquifer does not factor into the state regulation. The regulation only looks at specific water use categories and sets a budget for those. The amount of water used drives the regulation, not how it is supplied.

Will rates increase?

At this time, we do not plan to increase rates as a result of the regulation. However, as with all new regulations, there could be increased costs to meet objectives, which may eventually lead to new cost of service studies.

Where can I get more information?

More information is available on the [State Water Resources Control Board website](#).

If you have additional questions about the regulation or concerns about a specific property, please email us at outreach@dwa.org.