FEBRUARY 2015

CALIFORNIA URBAN WATER AGENCIES

CUWA'S CONTINUED COMMITMENT TO WATER CONSERVATION AND DROUGHT RESPONSE

Conservation savings are a critical component of current and future water supply portfolios for CUWA member agencies. CUWA agencies have invested heavily in conservation savings over the last few decades and are committed to continuing conservation investments, not only in response to the current drought emergency and to comply with SBx7-7, but more importantly to provide for current and future water demands.

DROUGHT RESPONSE ACTIONS

The CUWA agencies have long been leaders in conservation in California, and in response to the current emergency drought, CUWA agencies are taking action to further reduce demands. Increased incentives for lawn replacement programs have led to significantly increased customer participation. As shown in the graphic below, over the past 6 years, CUWA agencies have collectively expanded their residential turf replacement programs, achieving more than a 25 fold increase in turf replaced and increasing annual direct funding from $40,000 to nearly $14 million in rebates.

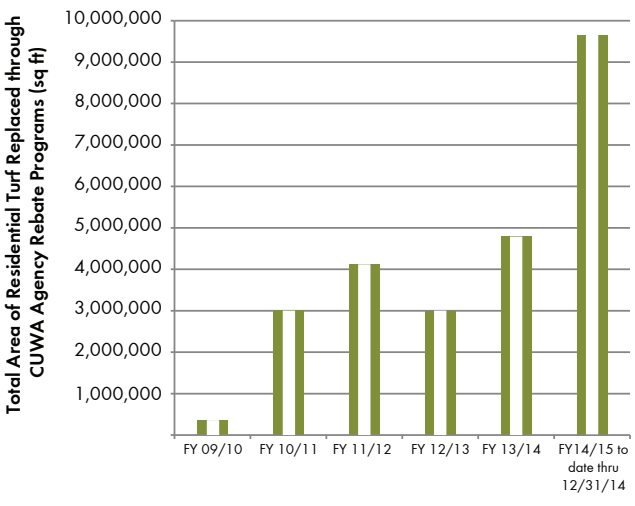
The CUWA agencies are not only complying with the State Water Resources Control Board's (State Board) emergency drought regulations, but have offered some recommended further actions to the State Board, in case the drought persists longer-term. The recommendations focus on actions that could be taken at the state and local levels in the near-term to increase conservation and identify other measures the State Board could consider adopting in additional regulations to result in longer-term water use transformations.

ACCELERATED ALTERNATIVE SUPPLIES AND SUPPLY DIVERSIFICATION

The CUWA agencies are taking steps to accelerate the development of alternative water supplies, diversify their supply portfolios, and pursue more drought-resistant supplies. Many agencies are advancing reuse, and some are considering or moving forward with plans to implement potable reuse programs. The State of California could support the further acceleration of drought-resistant supplies through enabling streamlined processes, such as CEQA processes and the development of potable reuse regulations.

CONSERVATION AND WATER'S ONGOING COSTS

While the CUWA agencies are working to reduce water demands during the current drought emergency, the cost for delivering water remains largely fixed (e.g., repairing and replacing aging infrastructure). The CUWA agencies' continued investments in local infrastructure, leak detection, and conservation programs help to provide high level services that customers need. Flexible financial management approaches are needed to enable water agencies to sustain and to continue providing services to their customers.



WHO IS CUWA?

Established in 1990, California Urban Water Agencies (CUWA) is a nonprofit corporation of 10 major urban water agencies that collectively deliver drinking water to approximately two-thirds of California's population. The water delivered by the 10 CUWA member agencies is a lifeline that supports California's urban populations and much of the state's $1.9 trillion economy.

CUWA agencies provide workshops to educate homeowners on sustainable landscape design. Customers are eligible for a variety of rebates for turf replacement, irrigation controls, and rainwater capture systems.

PER CAPITA WATER USE FACTS

Total gallons per capita day (GPCD) and Residential GPCD (R-GPCD) are two metrics utilized by water agencies to assess water demands, set water-use reduction goals, evaluate conservation program effectiveness, and communicate with the public.

What is GPCD and R-GPCD?

- GPCD is the total amount of water delivered for potable use (residential, commercial, and industrial uses) divided by the total population. SBx7-7 requires each urban retail agency to establish a GPCD reduction goal for 2020 as compared to a baseline water use to help the State achieve a 20 percent statewide reduction in daily per capita water use.
- R-GPCD is generally defined as residential sector potable water use divided by total population. The State Board's Emergency Water Conservation Regulations require urban retail agencies to report estimated R-GPCD.
- Comparison of per capita water use can be confusing due to the number of driving factors, as described in the text box to the right. Weather-normalization can provide some clarification. In addition, evaluating per capita water use for a longer-term trend (e.g., a 12-month rolling average) can provide valuable insight to more permanent changes over time.

What factors affect per capita water use?

As shown in the figure below, the following factors can significantly influence GPCD.

- **Climate** – Rainfall, temperature, and evaporation can vary monthly, seasonally and annually.
- **Building Density** – Highly urbanized areas typically have less landscape water use.
- **Economy** – GPCD may increase after an economic downturn ends, as commercial and industrial activity picks up.
- **Categories of water use** – GPCD is typically higher in service areas with commercial, industrial, and/or agricultural uses than areas that are primarily residential.
- **Seasonal residents and commuters** – Nonresident population (e.g., workforce commuters and tourists) water use can elevate GPCD.

What is the potential for additional savings?

As shown in the figure, CUWA agencies have been making steady long-term progress to reduce per capita water use, but as water use becomes more efficient, the potential for further reductions is limited. For example, a certain percent reduction may be more reasonably attained by agencies that are less efficient. Outdoor water use represents the greatest potential for the next significant increment of savings. Adoption of a new model landscape ordinance and enforcement by land use agencies are critical to enable greater outdoor savings, along with continued education and behavior change with landowners.