



Cal OES
GOVERNOR'S OFFICE
OF EMERGENCY SERVICES

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

February 19, 2014

Contact:

*Office of Public Information
& Media Relations
916-845-8510
media@caloes.ca.gov*

Governor Brown, Legislative Leaders Announce Emergency Drought Legislation

SACRAMENTO – With California experiencing its worst water shortage crisis in modern history, Governor Edmund G. Brown Jr. today joined Senate President pro Tem Darrell Steinberg and Assembly Speaker John A. Pérez to announce legislation to immediately help communities deal with the devastating dry conditions affecting our state and provide funding to increase local water supplies.

“This is a call to action. We must all do our part to conserve in this drought,” said Governor Brown. “The state is doing its part by providing immediate funding for drinking water, food, housing and assistance for water-conserving technologies,” said Governor Brown.

The legislation provides \$687.4 million to support drought relief, including money for housing and food for workers directly impacted by the drought, bond funds for projects to help local communities more efficiently capture and manage water and funding for securing emergency drinking water supplies for drought-impacted communities.

In addition, the legislation increases funding for state and local conservation corps to assist communities with efficiency upgrades and reduce fire fuels in fire risk areas, and includes \$1 million for the Save Our Water public awareness campaign – which will enhance its mission to inform Californians how they can do their part to conserve water.

“Without enough rain and snow this winter, we need to capture as much water as we can through any means possible. Water agencies around the state have projects ready to go to capture and distribute more of the water that’s now lost to evaporation or simply flowing out to the ocean. They simply need money to get those projects done,” said Senate President pro Tem Steinberg. “We don’t have to ignore environmental protections, raise fees or get bogged down in political arguments over projects that will take many years to produce a single drop of water. It’s time to focus on what we can do right now.”

“By making smart use of these funds, we can alleviate and prevent some of the worst impacts of the drought and, at the same time, make badly needed improvements to our water system that will benefit California for years to come,” Speaker Pérez said. “These targeted responses will have tangible results, but the solution requires more than legislation and investment. Every Californian needs to be a part of the solution, and we strongly urge every person in our state to take action to conserve water.”

In addition to the funding provided by the legislation, the bill calls for the California Department of Public Health (DPH) to adopt new groundwater replenishment regulations by July 1, 2014, and for the State Water Resources Control Board and the DPH to work on additional measures to allow for the use

of recycled water and storm water capture for increasing water supply availability.

The bill also makes statutory changes to ensure existing water rights laws are followed, including streamlined authority to enforce water rights laws and increased penalties for illegally diverting water during drought conditions. The bill also provides the California Department of Housing and Community Development with the greatest flexibility to maximize migrant housing units.

Several of the proposals included in this package were proposed in the Governor's January budget, but will now be expedited.

Highlights of the legislation include:

Enhancing Water Conservation and Improving Water Supplies

- \$549 million from the accelerated expenditure of voter-approved bonds, Proposition 84 and Proposition 1E, in the form of infrastructure grants for local and regional projects that are already planned or partially completed to increase local reliability, including recapturing of storm water, expand the use and distribution of recycled water, enhance the management and recharging of groundwater storage and strengthen water conservation.
- \$20 million transferred from the Greenhouse Gas Reduction Fund to the Department of Water Resources (DWR) for direct expenditures and grants to state and local agencies to improve water use efficiency, save energy and reduce greenhouse gas emissions from state and local water transportation and management systems.
- \$14 million for groundwater management across the state, including assistance to disadvantaged communities with groundwater contamination exacerbated by the drought.
- \$10 million transferred from the Greenhouse Gas Emissions Fund for the California Department of Food and Agriculture to invest in irrigation and water pumping systems that reduce water use, energy use and greenhouse gas emissions.
- \$10 million transferred from the Greenhouse Gas Emissions Fund for the DWR to establish a grant program for state and local agencies to implement residential, commercial or institutional water efficiency projects that reduce water and energy use.
- \$15 million from the General Fund for Emergency Drinking Water Fund to address emergency water shortages due to drought.
- \$13 million from the General Fund to augment the California Conservation Corps and local community conservation corps to expand water use efficiency and conservation activities and to reduce fuel loads to prevent catastrophic fires.

Assisting Californians Disproportionately Impacted by the Drought

- \$25.3 million from the General Fund for food assistance, which will be structured to maximize the potential federal drought assistance that can be provided to provide food assistance to those impacted by the drought.
- \$21 million from the General Fund and federal funds for housing related assistance for individuals impacted by the drought. With California facing one of the most severe droughts on record, Governor Brown declared a drought State of Emergency last month and directed state officials to take all necessary actions to prepare for water shortages. Governor Brown met with President Obama about crucial federal support during the ongoing drought last week, and the state continues to work with federal partners to ensure a coordinated drought response. Governor Brown and the administration have also expressed support for federal legislation introduced by Senators Feinstein and Boxer and Representatives Jim Costa, Tony Cárdenas and Sam Farr.

Across state government, action is being taken. The Department of General Services is leading water conservation efforts at state facilities, and the Department of Transportation is cutting water usage along California's roadways by 50 percent. Caltrans has also launched a public awareness campaign, putting a water conservation message on their more than 700 electronic highway signs. In January, the state took action to conserve water in numerous Northern California reservoirs to meet minimum needs for operations impacting the environment and the economy, and recently the Department of Water Resources and U.S. Bureau of Reclamation announced they would seek the authority to make water exchanges to deliver water to those who need it most.

The State Water Resources Control Board announced it would work with hydropower generators and the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission to preserve water in California reservoirs. Recently the California Department of Fish and Wildlife and the California Fish and Game Commission restricted fishing on some waterways due to low water flows worsened by the drought. The state is working to protect local communities from the dangers of extreme drought.

The California Department of Public Health identified and offered assistance to communities at risk of severe drinking water shortages and is working with other state and local agencies to develop solutions for vulnerable communities. CAL FIRE hired additional firefighters and is continuously adjusting staffing throughout the state to help address the increased fire threat due to drought conditions.

The California Department of Food and Agriculture launched a drought website to help farmers, ranchers and farmworkers find resources and assistance programs that may be available to them during the drought. Even as the state deals with the immediate impacts of the drought, it's also planning for the future. Recently, the California Natural Resources Agency, the California Environmental Protection Agency and CDFA released the California Water Action Plan, which will guide state efforts to enhance water supply reliability, restore damaged and destroyed ecosystems and improve the resilience of our infrastructure.

Governor Brown has called on all Californians to voluntarily reduce their water usage by 20 percent, and the Save Our Water campaign launched four public service announcements encouraging residents to conserve and has resources available in Spanish. Last December, the Governor formed a Drought Task Force to review expected water allocations and California's preparedness for water scarcity. In May 2013, Governor Brown issued an Executive Order to direct state water officials to expedite the review and processing of voluntary transfers of water.

###