

URBAN WATER INSTITUTE NEWSLETTER



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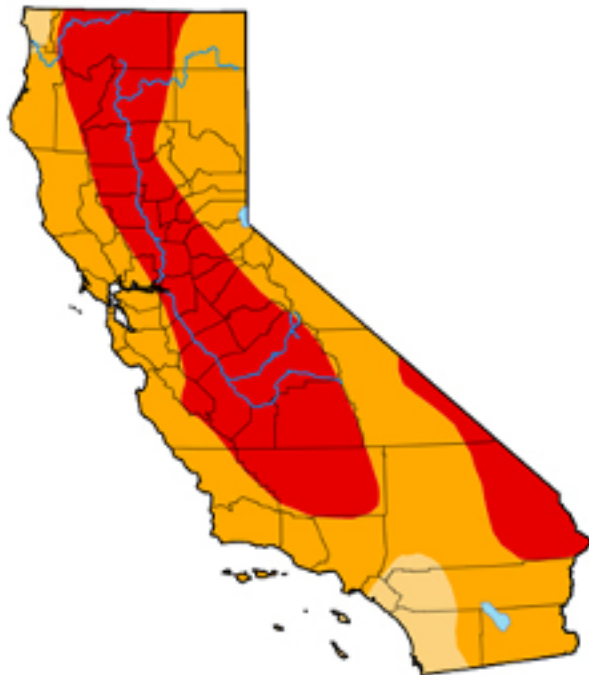
In Focus: Living In Drought

Answering the Tough Questions During Drought

By Katie Evans, Woodard & Curran

As water suppliers ask customers repeatedly to “do their part” during increasingly frequent drought emergencies, on top of sacrifices made during the past two years of a global pandemic and widespread rising costs, customers are asking tough questions about what it means for them. Communication in these scenarios is critical, requiring agencies to anticipate common questions and prepare standard responses.

California



Map released: Thurs. April 21, 2022

Data valid: April 19, 2022 at 8 a.m. EDT

Intensity



Authors

United States and Puerto Rico Author(s):
Brad Rippey, U.S. Department of Agriculture

Pacific Islands and Virgin Islands Author(s):
Richard Heim, NOAA/NCEI

The Drought Monitor focuses on broad-scale conditions. Local conditions may vary. See accompanying text summary for forecast statements.

Source: [Droughtmonitor.unl.edu](https://droughtmonitor.unl.edu)

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Why do I have to save?

Urban customers often wonder if their efforts make an impact compared to agricultural customers. When this question arises, it is important to point out that successful crops mean access to food. Share with your customer the restrictions being applied to agriculture as well.

Usually when residential water customers are being asked to restrict water usage, agricultural customers are also being asked to improve efficiency or leverage recycled water for irrigation purposes.

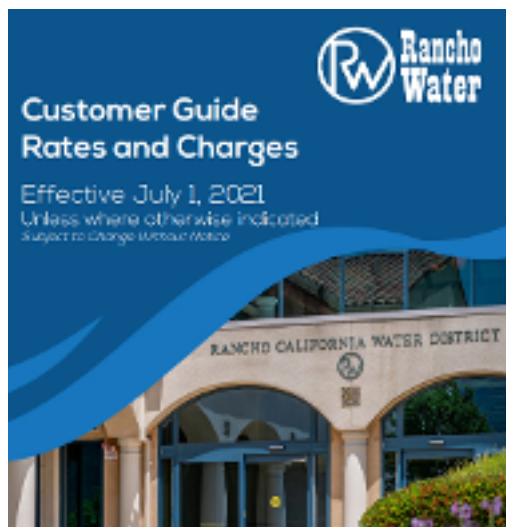
Why is new construction permitted?

Areas in which there is low to moderate building, agencies can rely on the local and state codes to help customers understand the requirements placed on new building. In larger growth areas, water agencies need to be specific in outlining long-term water management plans.

Help customers understand that the plans are designed to allow new, more efficient construction, while also asking existing customers to help during emergency drought situations.



Above: Agricultural Water Efficient Drip Irrigation
Source: CA Department of Water Resources



Above: Rancho California Water Rates booklet, illustrates transparency in rate setting
Source: Rancho CA Website

Why are rates increasing?

Water suppliers need to reassess their messaging to provide a more realistic explanation for asking customers to use less while they may indeed have to pay more. It becomes inherent to share how rates help maintain and improve critical infrastructure in an easy-to-understand way.

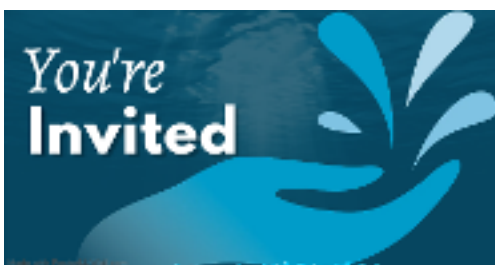
Help consumers understand that to improve the reliability of water supply, aging infrastructure needs to be updated and other systems incorporated. Investing in water systems is one way to avoid water shortages.

It is also important to share the state and federal funding secured for this work that supplements rates.

Regardless of the grant amount, customers are usually happy to see their agency trying to save money.

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Annual Water Conference: August 24-26, 2022



You are cordially invited to Urban Water Institute's Annual Water Conference - *Getting To The Heart Of The Matter*.

This three day, in person gathering will be held at San Diego Mission Bay Resort on August 24-26, 2022 in San Diego, CA.

For more details please visit the website and for more information you may contact us at: UrbanWater.com or (949) 679-9676.

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Prepare customers for water use restrictions

In our experience, customers react badly to quickly implemented regulations. “Early and often” is the time to communicate with consumers about the potential for more stringent regulations if drought conditions persist.

Educate your customer base about infrastructure improvements that better manage water supply.

Attend community events to provide education and answer questions. Issue a press release explaining why user restrictions are critical.



Above: Drought tolerant landscaping often required in new home construction in California



At Left: The San Diego County Water Authority has a longstanding commitment to informing and engaging the community about key issues, projects and programs that impact the regional water supply. Each year, Board members and staff present to more than 100 business, community, and civic groups. (Source SDCWA Website 2022)



Author, Katie Evans is the Senior Communications Strategist for Woodard & Curran, focusing on client's outreach and stakeholder needs. She specializes in stakeholder relations, community outreach, meeting facilitation, public relations, and crisis communications.