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82 Percent of Californians Say Residents Should Conserve Water – Drought or No Drought, Poll Shows

90 Percent Willing to Make “Significant Changes” to Their Own Use

SACRAMENTO, Calif. – As California enters a fourth year of drought, a new statewide poll reveals that the vast majority of Californians – some 90 percent – are willing to make significant changes to conserve water both inside and out, and more than 80 percent believe it’s important to conserve water regardless of whether the state is in drought or whether conservation is mandated by local water agencies.

The statewide poll of 801 registered voters – commissioned by the Association of California Water Agencies in partnership with the statewide conservation education program Save Our Water – also found that more than 80 percent of Californians view the drought and water shortages as “extremely” or “very” serious problems. Some 86 percent of polled residents believe that California is in a state of persistent water shortage.

The polling also indicates that Californians nearly universally agree that the drought is the most pressing problem facing the state and is more concerning than the economy, education, health care costs and taxes.

“California is indeed a dry state that can expect to see persistent droughts in its future. This polling underscores the fact that a vast majority of Californians understand this new normal,” said ACWA Executive Director Timothy Quinn. “But the poll also shows that an overwhelming majority of Californians are willing to significantly change their water usage whether we are in a drought or not. This is a sea change in public opinion and bodes well for our future.”

Mark Cowin, director of the Department of Water Resources, noted that the poll indicates over three-quarters of Californians have been getting the message about the state's ongoing drought. DWR is a partner with ACWA in the Save Our Water program.

"Clearly, Californians understand the magnitude of this drought," said Cowin. "Just as important, they understand that they can help California cope through the collective power of individual actions. If we all shut off sprinklers, make the effort to fix a leak, and urge friends and neighbors to do the same, it will make a difference."

The poll of registered voters was conducted Feb. 22 – March 1 by the polling firm Fairbank, Maslin, Maullin, Metz & Associates, or FM3. Its findings arrive as the State Water Resources Control Board prepares to act on proposed new emergency water conservation regulations today and extend existing ones as the state remains locked in a grinding fourth year of drought. The Sierra snowpack is at record low levels and January was among the driest months on record.

"This poll's findings stand out among our many years of tracking water issues in California," said Dave Metz, principal and president of FM3. "We've never seen such a huge majority recognize the severity of the water crisis as well as such a large group that views the water problems as ongoing and warranting continued conservation."

Metz noted that 83 percent of those polled said conserving water is "extremely" or "very" important whether or not water agencies are requiring water conservation, suggesting that for Californians "conserving water has become more of a core value than simply a reaction to regulations, restrictions or other external factors."

A summary of the poll's findings is [here](#).

The Save Our Water program is using the poll's findings to improve outreach to consumers this summer and to help local water agencies develop their own outreach programs on drought and conservation.

ACWA is a statewide association of public agencies whose 430 members are responsible for about 90% of the water delivered in California. For more information, visit www.acwa.com. For more on the Save Our Water program, visit www.saveourwater.com.

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