



## THE WALL STREET JOURNAL.

This copy is for your personal, non-commercial use only. To order presentation-ready copies for distribution to your colleagues, clients or customers visit <http://www.djreprints.com>.

<http://www.wsj.com/articles/california-orders-unprecedented-mandatory-water-cuts-1427913893>

U.S. NEWS

# California Orders Unprecedented, Mandatory Water Cuts

Sierra Nevada snowpack levels fall to record low

By JIM CARLTON

Updated April 1, 2015 7:02 p.m. ET

California's long-running drought has officially reached crisis mode, with Gov. Jerry Brown ordering statewide water reductions for the first time ever.

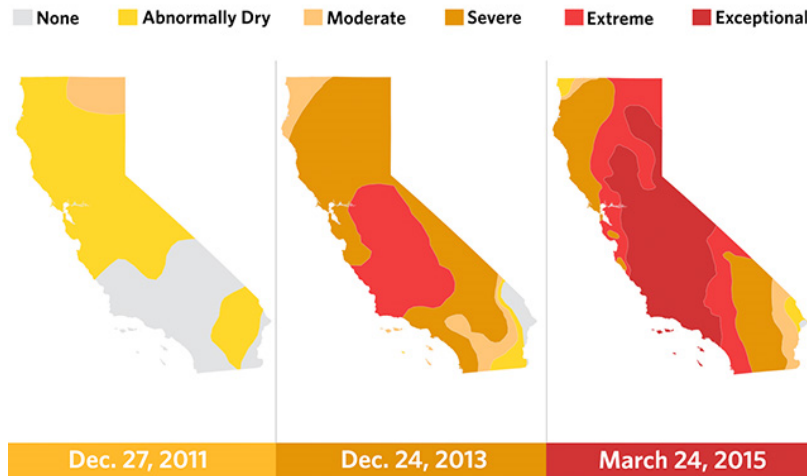
Under the governor's order Wednesday, state officials said household rationing will likely be implemented by some local water agencies to meet Mr. Brown's goal of reducing overall water use in the state by 25% over the next nine months, the equivalent of enough water for a city of six million people for one year.

Much of the crackdown will focus on irrigation of lawns and other outdoor landscapes, which account for a large amount of water use, state officials said. In his order, the Democratic governor singled out large campuses, golf courses and cemeteries as places where restrictions would be required.

Mr. Brown announced the new actions while accompanying state surveyors to a spot in the Sierra Nevada where no snow was found for the first time in 75 years of monitoring every April 1. "Today we are standing on dry grass where there should be five feet of snow," Mr. Brown said. "This historic drought demands unprecedented action."

## California's Long Challenge With Drought

### California Drought Intensity



Electronic readings showed the water equivalent of the snow in the Sierra and other California mountains at 5% of normal, the lowest on record for that date, setting off alarm bells in the state capital of Sacramento. Roughly one-third of the state's water supplies come from snow that blankets mountain ranges each winter.

### RELATED

- 5 Things to Know About the California Drought (<http://blogs.wsj.com/briefly/2015/04/01/california-drought-5-things-to-know/>)
- Gov. Brown Signs \$1 Billion in Water Infrastructure Bills in a Dry California (<http://www.wsj.com/articles/gov-brown-signs-1-billion-in-water-infrastructure-bills-in-a-dry-california-1427492934?KEYWORDS=drought>)
- California Adopts New Water Restrictions Amid Long-Running Drought (<http://www.wsj.com/articles/california-to-adopt-new-water-restrictions-amid-long-running-drought-1426633451?KEYWORDS=drought>)
- California Drought Intensified in January (<http://www.wsj.com/articles/california-drought-intensifies-in-january-1422822938?KEYWORDS=drought>)
- California Turns to the Ocean for Drinking Water (<http://www.wsj.com/articles/california-turns-to-the-ocean-for-1424215351?KEYWORDS=drought>)

California's network of reservoirs was designed to capture the water from snow melt in the spring. But this year, reservoirs are already near half-empty and aren't expected to see much more water. That is problematic because demand typically peaks in the warmer summer months, while California's rainy season doesn't start until the fall.

As a result, the governor and his staff concluded they needed to act more urgently, stepping up from his call last year for a voluntary 20% cut in water use.

“The situation is unprecedented and critical and requires the action of all hands on deck,” Mark Ghilarducci, director of the California Office of Emergency Services, said in a media briefing Wednesday.

With California’s dry season approaching, the cutbacks will mean a deepening of the pain that some sectors of the economy have already felt.

Agriculture, in particular has been hard hit, as imported water supplies have been cut to zero in some cases.

The state’s farmers left 400,000 acres of fields unplanted in 2014, resulting in a loss of 17,000 jobs, and they will likely forgo planting on hundreds of thousands more acres this year, said Karen Ross, secretary of the California Department of Food and Agriculture.



Gov. Jerry Brown, center, talks Wednesday with Mark Cowin, left, director of the California Department of Water Resources, and Frank Gehrke, chief of the California Cooperative Snow Surveys Program for the DWR, on a barren meadow where an annual snow survey is held near Echo Summit, Calif. Mr. Gehrke said this was the first time since he has been conducting the survey that he found no snow at this location on this date. *PHOTO: RICH PEDRONCELLI/ASSOCIATED PRESS*

State officials said the governor’s new order won’t require farmers to fallow more fields, although they will be asked to step up water efficiency measures.

Instead, the governor’s order targets users that state officials say haven’t done their fair share. In general, conservation has been less successful in Southern California than in the rest of the state, in part because of the region’s concentration of estate-sized homes and golf courses, according to monthly surveys of water use by the State Water Resources Control Board. The board will be charged with implementing the mandatory cuts.

“We are all in this together and we will expect everyone to step up,” said Felicia Marcus, chairwoman of the board, which will direct the state’s hundreds of local water agencies to achieve the reductions. Those that fail to meet goals may face penalties of up to \$10,000 a day.

Officials with the Association of California Water Agencies, which comprises most local water districts, said they planned to comply and welcome the stepped-up measures.

“The combination of dry conditions and record-warm temperatures has put us in an unprecedented drought that requires an extraordinary response,” said John Coleman, the group’s president.

Mr. Brown also called for increased enforcement against water waste, investment in new water-saving technologies and replacement of 50 million square feet of lawn throughout the state—the equivalent of about 900 football fields—with drought-tolerant landscaping.

The move toward drought-tolerant landscaping is already widespread in southwestern cities such as Las Vegas, but has been slower to take off in California.

While the governor drew broad support, some Republican lawmakers criticized him and other Democrats for not doing enough to save water during wet years, such as by increasing the amount of storage space for it.

“We know that we cannot conserve or ration our way out of this drought,” U.S. House Majority Leader Kevin McCarthy of California said in a statement.

But supporters of Mr. Brown said he is right to target conservation. “Providing storage does nothing for you now when there’s no rain,” said Lester Snow, executive director of the California Water Foundation advocacy group and former director of the state Department of Water Resources. “Your response is conservation, period.”

Write to Jim Carlton at [jim.carlton@wsj.com](mailto:jim.carlton@wsj.com)

Copyright 2014 Dow Jones & Company, Inc. All Rights Reserved

This copy is for your personal, non-commercial use only. Distribution and use of this material are governed by our Subscriber Agreement and by copyright law. For non-personal use or to order multiple copies, please contact Dow Jones Reprints at 1-800-843-0008 or visit [www.djreprints.com](http://www.djreprints.com).