

# OC READIES FOR ADDITIONAL CONSERVATION MANDATES

## STATE WATER BOARD CHAIR FACES OC LEADERS AT FORUM

Even as OC readies for a rainy El Niño winter, water leaders are girding themselves – and their customers – for another round of state-wide mandatory conservation measures.

Speaking before several hundred attendees at the Water Policy Forum earlier this month, State Water Resources Board Chair Felicia Marcus said she was impressed by the performance of Orange County water agencies and their customers in meeting existing mandatory state water conservation measures.

Marcus's participation in the forum's question-and-answer session with **Larry D. Dick, a director of the Municipal Water District of Orange County**, came as the State Water Board prepares on February 2 to consider a resolution to extend the existing emergency regulations as ordered by Governor Edmund G. Brown Jr.

The proposed regulations make some concessions to water districts – such as allowing credit for population growth since the baseline year of 2013, and credit to agencies in Central and North OC that benefit from recycled water pumped into the county's primary aquifer. But districts can only get a maximum of an 8 percent credit toward the conservation mandates, which go as high as 36 percent in OC.

A coalition of Orange County agencies – including MWDOC, Irvine Ranch, Yorba Linda, Santa Margarita, Moulton Niguel and Orange County water districts – has worked to soften the regulations.

Despite the pushback from water districts state-wide, Marcus said she believed the governor made the right decision to order the mandatory conservation steps – even though they had “unintended consequences” on water district budgets.

FOLLOWING ARE SOME HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE JANUARY 22 WATER POLICY FORUM:

**MWDOC: What would lift the state's conservation efforts?**

**Marcus:** There is a certain level at which the governor will withdraw the drought proclamation. Different parts of the state may be in different situations; we'll see where we are in two months [after the rainy season] and figure out how to do something appropriate. Just last week we got appreciable runoff and snow in the Sierras. Our reservoirs are still below average; snowpack is above average, so we'll keep an eye on things. It ain't over 'til it's over.

**MWDOC: Should there be better monitoring of California's snowpack?**

**Marcus:** We have a good measurement to monitor the snowpack. But our groundwater is tremendous-



PHOTO BY: BRYCE ROBERTO, MWDOC

“I am impressed by the performance of Orange County water agencies and their customers in meeting existing mandatory state water conservation measures.”

### Felicia Marcus

STATE WATER RESOURCES BOARD CHAIR

ly depleted and it will take a number of years to restore. The long-term water situation is based on a combination of reservoir water and snowpack. We are still in a very deep hole and it's better to be safe than sorry. Many people are mad at us when we have rain or snow [and still require water-saving measures.] So someone – the governor – had to make the choice to mandate water conservation. If in April we are at 100-plus percent with the snowpack and the reservoirs are higher than average, we'll be having a different conversation.

**MWDOC: There's a lot of frustration among water districts that they don't get credit for past projects that developed new sources of water or boosted conservation. Will adjustments encourage conservation incentives in the future?**

**Marcus:** I'm inclined to support staff recommenda-

tions to give credits because of the extent of local investments. But during a three- to four-year drought cycle, those accomplishments are drowned out. The State Water Board approach is focused on the demand side. Perhaps there should be a more balanced approach between supply and demand? When we tried the first round of drought contingency plans they didn't work well and we had to set more baseline standards. The answer is in coming up with a measure that folks can meet and to determine how the state can work with everyone on a general process to tune up the standards.

**MWDOC: Will the districts that exceeded their conservation mandates be able to roll their savings forward?**

**Marcus:** We haven't talked about that. I like the cumulative approach. I've had trouble with headlines that say agencies didn't make their goals in a month. The fact that people are saving 20 percent in the winter is amazing – that means they're saving water indoors. Please, don't put the kettle on for your tea. Bathe. Shower – take a short shower. I think people have done amazingly well.

*Marcus did imply some level of regulation will continue, even after the drought ends.*

“It would be a mistake to toss the whole thing out and say “phew,” she said. “I want us out of the emergency regulation area – we stepped in during the emergency because we had certain tools and we've had this season to think about it. Having a healthy snowpack and healthy reservoirs gives us breathing room to not wait for the next drought but to get in gear and get input on where we want to go next.”

Learn More about the Water Wise Lifestyle at the OC Register's Knowledge Café: [ocregister.com/sections/knowledge-café](http://ocregister.com/sections/knowledge-café)

Welcome to **Orange County's Water Wise Lifestyle**, an ongoing series to help you navigate the new normal of California's water resources. Various water districts will be offering important information and tips along with rebates and cost-saving incentives for homeowners and businesses.

## CALENDAR OF EVENTS

### FEBRUARY 6

The UC Cooperative Education Master Gardeners program introduces Saturdays@SouthCoastREC, a family-friendly adventure series for those interested in learning about **GARDENING AND FOOD PRESERVATION**. The events begin at 9 a.m. at South Coast Research and Extension Center, 7601 Irvine Blvd, Irvine.

The admission fee is \$5 per person or \$10 per family of two or more. Parking is free. See [uccemg.com/?story=1798](http://uccemg.com/?story=1798) for more info.

### FEBRUARY 17

Irvine Ranch Water District holds a RightScape Workshop on **DRIP IRRIGATION MADE EASY**. Learn how to convert your existing sprinkler system into drip irrigation. The workshop is from 6 to 8 p.m. at IRWD's Multi-Purpose Room, 15600 Sand Canyon Ave. For more info and to sign up visit [rightscapenow.com/events](http://rightscapenow.com/events)

### FEBRUARY 24

Irvine Ranch Water district holds a RightScape Workshop on **SOIL, WATER AND PLANT RELATIONSHIPS**. Learn how to build up your soil, composting, plant development and proper watering. The workshop is from 6 to 8 p.m. at IRWD's Multi-Purpose Room, 15600 Sand Canyon Ave. For more info and to sign up visit [rightscapenow.com/events](http://rightscapenow.com/events)

### WATER PARTNER PROFILE: EAST ORANGE COUNTY WATER DISTRICT



East Orange County Water District was founded in 1961 and prides itself on providing high-quality, reliable water to its customers and holding the line on expenses. Within its 10-square-mile service area, the district provides retail water service to approximately 1,200 customers in the unincorporated Orange County communities of East Orange and North Tustin, including Cowan Heights, Panorama Heights and Santa Ana Heights, as well as wholesale water service to approximately 100,000 customers via the cities of Orange and Tustin, the Irvine Ranch Water District and Golden State Water Company.

East Orange County Water District has an excellent record of cost controls, customer service and water quality. It is debt-free and uses debt only when needed for projects that have inter-generational benefits. The district also follows a “pay-as-you-go” financing model for all other capital expenditures and its leaders are proud to have no unfunded pension liabilities, no post-employment benefits and no lavish employment perks.

East Orange County Water District has been meeting the state's 36 percent water reduction mandate, “thanks to an extensive community outreach and education campaign by the district and the cooperation and commitment of our customers to strict water conservation at their homes,” said General Manager Lisa Ohlund. “We believe that we will achieve our goal of complying with the state mandate. We truly appreciate our customers and all that they have done – and continue to do – to conserve our precious water resources.” [eocwd.com](http://eocwd.com)

## PROPOSED NEW STANDARDS

### Agency Conservation Standards and ER Adjustments

AGENCY	ORIGINAL STANDARD	SUSTAINABLE SUPPLY CREDIT	REVISED STANDARD
ANAHEIM	20%	7%	13%
BREA	24%	--	24%*
BUENA PARK	20%	7%	13%
EL TORO WD	24%	--	24%
EOCWD	36%	7%	29%
FOUNTAIN VALLEY	20%	7%	13%
FULLERTON	28%	7%	21%
GARDEN GROVE	20%	7%	13%
GOLDEN STATE - COWAN HEIGHTS	36%	7%	29%
GOLDEN STATE - PLACENTIA	24%	7%	17%
GOLDEN STATE - WEST ORANGE	16%	7%	9%
HUNTINGTON BEACH	20%	7%	23%

AGENCY	ORIGINAL STANDARD	SUSTAINABLE SUPPLY CREDIT	REVISED STANDARD
IRVINE RANCH WD	16%	7%	9%*
LA HABRA	28%	--	28%
LA PALMA	20%	7%	13%
LAGUNA BEACH CWD	24%	--	24%
MESA WATER	20%	10%	12%**
MOULTON NIGUEL WD	20%	--	20%
NEWPORT BEACH	28%	7%	21%
ORANGE	28%	7%	21%
SAN CLEMENTE	24%	--	24%
SAN JUAN CAPISTRANO	28%	--	28%
SANTA ANA	12%	7%	8%***
SANTA MARGARITA WD	24%	--	24%*
SEAL BEACH	8%	7%	8%***
SERRANO	36%	7%	29%
SOUTH COAST WD	24%	--	24%
TRABUCO CANYON WD	28%	--	28%
TUSTIN	28%	7%	21%
WESTMINSTER	20%	7%	13%
YORBA LINDA WD	36%	6%	30%

\* AGENCIES MAY BE ELIGIBLE FOR EITHER A GROWTH OR CLIMATE ADJUSTMENT  
 \*\* CONSTRAINED BY CAP OF 8% \*\*\* CONSTRAINED BY FLOOR OF 8%

**Orange County's Water Wise Lifestyle** page is brought to you weekly by the family of OC water providers, including the cities of Brea, Buena Park, Fountain Valley, Garden Grove, Huntington Beach, La Habra, Newport Beach, Orange, San Clemente, Seal Beach and Tustin, and the East Orange County, El Toro, Irvine Ranch, Santa Margarita, Serrano, South Coast, Trabuco Canyon and Yorba Linda water districts. The Municipal Water District of OC and the OC Stormwater Program are also participating.