

WATER-USE EFFICIENCY

The Water Authority's Leadership Role in Water Conservation

Water conservation is a core element of the San Diego County Water Authority's long-term strategy to improve the reliability of the region's water supply by diversifying its supply sources.

Since 1991, the Water Authority's water-use efficiency programs and initiatives cumulatively have conserved more than 1 million acre-feet of water. These savings have been achieved through measures that include incentives on water-efficient devices, legislative efforts, and outreach programs. Per capita water use in San Diego region has declined 49% since 1990.

To strengthen the Water Authority's ongoing commitment to supporting water conservation, the agency's Board of Directors adopted a set of Water Use Efficiency Policy Principles. The principles provide high-level, strategic direction on the prioritization, development and implementation of water-use efficiency programs and initiatives.

LEGISLATION

For over three decades, the Water Authority has been a statewide leader in sponsoring legislation to improve water-use efficiency. Landmark water conservation legislation sponsored by the Water Authority includes:

- **1991** – SB 1224 required that toilets sold or installed in 1994 or later use no more than 1.6 gallons per flush — a standard adopted nationally in the Energy Policy Act of 1992. It also required urinals to use a gallon of water or less per flush.
- **2000** – SB 553 updated best management practices for Urban Water Management Plans by revising the list of water conservation programs, such as residential ultra-low-flush toilet replacement and high-efficiency washing machine rebate programs. Further, in 2009, AB 1465 required Urban Water Management Plans to include descriptions of water conservation goals, and implementation and reporting measures.

PER CAPITA POTABLE WATER USE IN SAN DIEGO REGION HAS DECLINED 49% SINCE 1990



- **2001** – AB 952 provided tax incentives for the purchase of water conservation devices such as water- and energy-conserving clothes washers, and toilets that flushed 1.6 gallons or less. Further, in 2002, AB 1561 set higher statewide water-efficiency standards for residential clothes washers.
- **2003** – AB 514 required water users to be fully metered and metered users to start being charged volumetrically. Further, in 2004, AB 2572 required all water connections in California be metered by 2025 and that customers with meters be billed based upon water use, rather than a flat fee. In 2007, SB 1050 changed the State Water Code to allow water suppliers that promoted conservation through volumetric water pricing to charge for the actual volume of metered water delivered.
- **2004** – AB 2717 created a statewide task force on outdoor landscape water conservation. As a result, in 2006, AB 1881 implemented the task force’s recommendations, including adoption of water-efficient landscape ordinances around the state, standards for landscape irrigation equipment, separate water meters for large landscapes, and prohibitions against banning low-wateruse plants.
- **2009** – The Water Authority successfully lobbied the San Diego County delegation to the state Legislature to vote for SBX7-7, establishing a statewide goal of a 20% reduction in per capita water use by 2020.
- **2018** – SB 606 and AB 1668 created a new framework for long-term, budget-based water efficiency and drought planning for water suppliers. In 2024, the State Water Resources Control Board adopted the Making Conservation a California Way of Life

49% Reduction in per capita water use since 1990



4 National WaterSense Excellence Awards won by the Water Authority



regulation, which outlines how water suppliers will calculate their water use targets.

WATER EFFICIENCY AND CONSERVATION TOOLS

Rebates and Incentives A range of rebates and incentives programs are available to Water Authority customers who implement efficient water technologies and practices. These include rebates on irrigation devices, turf replacement, high efficiency clothes washers and toilets. These programs have helped hundreds of thousands of residential, commercial, and agricultural water users improve their water efficiency.

Audits and Surveys Programs offering residential, commercial and agricultural customers free, on-site water-use evaluations that identify specific measures to save water are a great resource.

“How-To” Tools and Market Transformation The Water Authority is empowering and inspiring more residents to adopt “conservation as a way of life” through online and in-person classes for residential and commercial customers, on demand landscape how-to videos, local resource lists and other helpful publications, and interagency partnerships designed to maximize the reliability and effectiveness of water-saving measures.



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