

Protecting California's most precious resource: **water**



The months of sunshine and short, mild winters that help make California such a pleasant place to live also make the state especially prone to drought.

California typically receives about 23 inches of rain each year. About 75 percent of that rain falls between November and March and half of it falls between December and February — the difference between a wet year and a dry year is only a matter of a few major storms. Historical records and much older data from tree growth patterns show that recurring drought has been a fact of life for California for thousands of years. The state experienced eight multi-year droughts during the last 100 years, most recently from 1987 to 1992.

Californians get about 70 percent of their water from reservoirs, rivers, creeks and streams and about 30 percent from underground sources. About three-quarters of California's water is found north of Sacramento, while about three-quarters of California's water users are located south of Sacramento. For this reason, dry conditions in one part of the state can have a significant effect on other parts of the state where water is more abundant.



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California Drought Preparedness

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In cooperation with
California Rural Water Association and
Department of Water Resources

Wise water use as a way of life

As the state's population continues to boom, there is increased competition for California's limited water resources. Given the certainty that another drought will occur, preparing now by learning simple ways to conserve water helps ensure that Californians will continue to get the water they need.

Other important benefits from learning to use water wisely include:

- Helping to reduce the need for costly new water infrastructure. Building new reservoirs and aqueducts is extremely costly for taxpayers and often comes with high environmental costs, too.
- Holding down energy consumption. Since water treatment and pumping together represent the single largest industrial use of electricity and diesel in California, saving water helps conserve energy and hold down water costs associated with energy. Reducing energy consumption will also help prevent climate change and its devastating consequences for California.
- Protecting crucial natural habitats and animal and plant species. Maintaining stream flows protects marine fisheries that are crucial to California's economy. Wetlands serve as natural filters that help store and purify groundwater



Five ways to save

The reasons for using water wisely are simple, and so are the ways to make it happen. Here are the five most effective ways to save water at home:

To learn more about using water wisely, visit California Drought Preparedness at www.cadroughtprep.net.

1 *Fix leaks.* Check your indoor water-using appliances and devices for leaks. Studies have shown homes can waste more than 10 percent due to leaking, which costs both you and the environment. Another large water waster can be leaks in your sprinkler system. With an older sprinkler system, more than 50 to 75 percent of the water can be lost to leaks.

3 *Replace your clothes washer, the second largest water user in your home.* Energy Star™ rated washers that also have a Water Factor at or lower than 9.5 use 35 to 50 percent less water and 50 percent less energy per load than a standard washer.

4 *Plant the right plants with proper landscape design and irrigation.* Whether you're putting in a new yard or slowly changing the current landscaping at your home, select plants that are appropriate for your local climate conditions. Maintaining a large lawn in a dry climate requires significant amounts of water. Consider Xeriscape or "California-friendly" landscaping.

5 *Water only when your plants need it.* Most water is wasted in your garden by watering when your plants do not need the water or by not maintaining the sprinkler system. Use a timer when watering by hand. If you use an automatic sprinkler system, make sure the controller has a rain shutoff device that is appropriately scheduled — most water is wasted by outdoor watering in months prior to or just after the rainy season when intermittent rains occur.

2 *Replace your old toilet, the largest water user in your home.* If your home was built before 1992 and the toilet has never been replaced, then it is very unlikely that you have a water-efficient, low-flush toilet. Check the date stamp inside the toilet by lifting the lid and looking at the manufacturer's imprint on the back wall of the tank. Then consider that you can cut your water use 68 percent by going from a 5 gallon standard toilet to a new 1.6 gallon low-flush model.

