

California Water Fact Sheet

From its hot, dry deserts to its snowcapped peaks and foggy shores, California is a mosaic of diverse culture, climate, and geography. The state's varying water needs and resources are both a reflection and a consequence of this diversity. Balancing water supply and demand is a perennial problem in the state. Californians are no strangers to droughts and water restrictions. Although California faces some of the most challenging water issues in the country, the state is also a national leader in water efficiency and water conservation.



Precipitation, both rain and snow, is at the heart of California's water supply. Annual precipitation can vary from less than one inch in Death Valley to as much as 100 inches along the North Coast. In northern and eastern parts of the state, California receives an abundance of water from rainfall and snowmelt, but most of the state's water is needed and used in population centers to the south or used to irrigate farmland in the Central Valley.

To move water across the state, California relies heavily on water conveyance and storage systems such as the California State Water Project, which provides drinking water to nearly two-thirds of the state's population.

California's water supply is becoming increasingly overtaxed. Each year, the state consumes 2 million more acre-feet of ground water than it recharges naturally. California is also at higher risk for drought than many other areas of the country and has experienced major drought events from

2007–2009, 1987–1992, and 1976–1977. During drought years, total precipitation can be less than half the annual average. Rainfall and snowfall can vary significantly not only from year to year but season to season as well.

On average, 75 percent of California's annual precipitation occurs between November and March, and peak agricultural and urban water use generally does not align with peak precipitation.

Population Pressure

Already the most populous state in the country, California's population is projected to increase to nearly 60 million by 2050. This will lead to increased demand for both drinking water and landscape irrigation water and continue to strain the drought-prone states freshwater resources. By the year 2020, this population growth will result in unmet water demand of 2.4 million acre-feet of water in average rainfall years, and up to 6.2 million acre-feet in drought years.

California has long promoted water conservation as a means to preserve this precious resource as droughts and growing population continue to strain supplies. The state Department of Water Resources and the Association of California Water Agencies sponsor Save Our Water, a campaign that educates consumers on the need for water efficiency, offers tips to use less water at home, and features stories about how California residents are doing their part, from replacing grass with native plants to turning off the tap while brushing their teeth.

Continuing to Conserve

With its innovative conservation measures and extensive resource planning, California has often been ahead of the curve in addressing water supply issues. In 2007, California became the first state in the nation to require more efficient toilets than the current national standard, or 1.6 gallons per flush. By 2014, every toilet sold in California will be required to use 1.28 gallons per flush or less.

In 2010, California released its *20 X 2020 Water Conservation Plan*, which was initiated by Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger and designed to reduce per capita water consumption 20 percent. It set in motion a number of activities to encourage water efficiency and required urban water suppliers to set reduction targets for 2015 and 2020.

California is also home to more than 300 WaterSense® partners, committed to increasing the use of water-efficient products and spreading the word about the need for smart water use.

If every home in California installed a WaterSense labeled bathroom faucet, it would help save 7 billion gallons of water annually—saving households \$20 million in water and sewer bills and nearly \$70 million in energy costs to heat water. Additionally, water and wastewater utilities would save at least 20

million kilowatt-hours of electricity that would normally be used for supplying and treating that water.

Replacing all of the old, inefficient showerheads in California homes with WaterSense labeled models could help save about 87 million gallons of water every day. That's more than enough water to meet the daily needs of San Francisco County's public supply system! Additionally, it could save more than \$100 million in water bills and nearly \$300 million in energy costs for heating the water.

For more information and water-saving tips, visit www.epa.gov/watersense or www.saveourh2o.org.

Savings at the Local Level

Through water-efficiency programs in the city of Santa Rosa, residents and businesses are saving 1.4 billion gallons of water per year. Santa Rosa encourages residents to adopt "water wise" habits, check for leaks regularly, and install efficient plumbing fixtures.

The city of Roseville has worked to encourage water efficiency by providing free "Water-Wise House Calls" to its residents. During a house call, a trained water use specialist reviews home water use, offers water-wise recommendations, and even installs water-efficient showerheads and faucet aerators.

