

**DROUGHT**



A drought-tolerant garden is seen on Wednesday in Irvine. State water officials say they will consider dropping a mandate requiring conservation in the state's fifth year of drought.

# California turns conservation of water over to local officials

By Scott Smith and Amy Taxin  
The Associated Press

**FRESNO** » California decided Wednesday to allow hundreds of local water districts to set their own conservation goals after a wet winter eased the five-year drought in some parts of the state.

The new approach lifts a statewide conservation order enacted last year that requires at least a 20 percent savings. Beginning next month, districts serving nearly 40 million Californians will compare water supply and demand with the assumption that dry conditions will stretch for three years. The

districts would then set savings goals through January and report their calculations to the state. Felicia Marcus, chair of the State Water Resources Control Board, called it a difficult set of decisions for the panel. "We don't want to cry wolf. We also don't want to put our head in the sand," she said. "This compromise allows us to keep our eyes wide open." Tam Doduc abstained from voting, saying the revised approach does not do enough to address the drought emergency spelled out by Gov. Jerry Brown in a proclamation last week. "I have to confess that I feel very uneasy with it," she said of the change. "This is an emergency."

Water board officials rejected a proposal for a modest statewide conservation level, saying it contradicted the intent of the plan to empower local districts. Regulators said they maintain the authority to return to strict conservation, if water-saving efforts dramatically slip or if last winter's rain and snow turns out to be a blip in the easing of the drought. At her home in Irvine, Lee Nguyen says she's done her part to save water and supports local control over conservation efforts. "I wash my veggies and I save water," she said, explaining that she uses it on her plants. "I save water for myself, for all of us, and for the environment."

Her supplier, the Irvine Ranch Water District in Orange County, led the push for a regional approach. Fiona Sanchez, director of water resources for the district, said she is confident that districts statewide will carefully study their supply and demand. "If agencies are not taking it seriously, it will be very evident they can't meet their customers' demands," she said. Some districts might set strict conservation goals for residents and businesses,

while others could determine it is time to lift conservation mandates altogether. Regulators considered the new approach after El Nino storms delivered nearly average amounts of rain and snow this winter in Northern California, filling key reservoirs. Southern California, however, remains deep in drought. Bans on actions such as wasting water by washing sidewalks with a hose or cars without a shut-off nozzle will become permanent under the proposed regulation. Max Gomberg, a senior climate scientist for the state water board, said Californians understand the drought remains critical. He doesn't expect people to suddenly begin wasting water with the changes. "Californians have shown that when there's a serious drought and a need to conserve, people step up and pitch in," he said. Environmentalists have urged state regulators not to let up on conservation, citing forecasts that indicate the possibility of a dry winter ahead. Much of the state remains in severe drought, said Tracy Quinn, a senior policy analyst for the Natural Resources Defense Council. "This makes a compelling case for not relaxing conservation standards as we head into the hottest, driest and highest water using season of the year," she said. "Conservation needs to be a way of life in California."

Southern California landscaper Greg Gritters says local water officials are best suited to manage their supplies. His clients have had to choose between keeping their lawns green at the expense of huge water bills or turn down their sprinklers and watch their yard turn brown. "Either way they're unhappy," said Gritters, owner of Vintage Landscape in Coachella Valley.

**OVERTIME**

# More work, more pay? New rule extends overtime to millions

By Christopher S. Rugaber and Julie Carr Smyth  
The Associated Press

**COLUMBUS, OHIO** » More than 4 million U.S. workers will become newly eligible for overtime pay under rules issued Wednesday by the Obama administration. The rule seeks to bolster overtime protections that have been eroded in recent decades by inflation. A diminishing proportion of workers have benefited from overtime regulations, which date to the 1930s and require employers to pay 1½ times a worker's wage for work that exceeds 40 hours a week. Vice President Joe Biden announced the changes at Jeni's Splendid Ice Creams in Columbus, Ohio. In the fast food and retail industries in particular, many employees are deemed managers, work long hours but are paid a flat salary that barely exceeds the income of the hourly workers they supervise who receive overtime pay. Under the new rules, released in draft form last summer, the annual salary threshold at which companies can deny overtime pay will be doubled from \$23,660 to nearly \$47,500. That would make 4.2 million more salaried workers eligible for overtime pay. Hourly workers would continue to be mostly guaranteed overtime.

The White House estimates that the rule change will raise pay by \$1.2 billion a year over the next decade. Some employers, though, might choose to reduce their employees' additional hours to avoid paying overtime, thereby making the workers' schedules more consistent. "Either way, the worker wins," said Vice President Joe Biden on a conference call with reporters Tuesday. Business groups, however, argued that the changes will increase paperwork and scheduling burdens for small companies and force many businesses to convert salaried workers to hourly ones to more closely track working time. Many employees will see that as a step down, they said. "With the stroke of a pen, the Labor Department is demoting millions of workers," David French, a senior vice president for the National Retail Federation, said. "Most of the people impacted by this change will not see any additional pay."

The overtime threshold was last updated in 2004 and now covers just 7 percent of full-time salaried workers, administration officials said — down from 62 percent in 1975. The higher threshold, to take effect Dec. 1, will lift that ratio back to 35 percent, Labor Secretary Tom Perez said. Perez has spearheaded the administration's effort and has worked on

formulating the rule for the past two years. The new rule is intended to boost earnings for middle- and lower-income workers, Perez said, which have been stagnant since the late 1990s. Overtime pay hasn't received as much attention as nationwide efforts to increase the minimum wage, but it could have a broad impact. "This, in essence, is a minimum wage increase for the middle class," Judy Conti, federal advocacy coordinator for the National Employment Law Project, an advocacy group, said. Workers making more than \$47,500 may still be eligible for overtime pay, unless they perform management, supervisory or professional functions — the so-called "white collar" duties test. The liberal Economic Policy Institute estimates that 4.9 million people will become newly eligible for overtime, slightly more than the government's figure, and that an additional 7.6 million will benefit because they have previously been denied overtime pay as white collar workers. Yet with salaries below the new threshold, they will now have a stronger claim to overtime pay. Overtime has become a sore point for many managers, assistant managers, and management trainees in the fast food and retail industries. Despite their titles, they have complained in lawsuits against such chains as Chipotle and Dollar General that they spend most of 50- or 60-hour workweeks staffing cash registers, mopping floors, or performing other tasks typical of regular employees. Yet they don't get paid time and a half when they clock more than 40 hours in a week. The retail federation warns that many of the affected workers will have their hours reduced to below 40 hours a week. Others might receive overtime pay but would have their base wages reduced so their overall income would remain the same. Tammy McCutchen, a lawyer who represents employers, contended that that workers converted to hourly pay from salaried status will likely have less flexible schedules. An hourly worker "who takes an afternoon off to attend a parent-teacher conference will not be paid for that time, but an employee (who is exempt from overtime) will be paid her full guaranteed salary," McCutchen said in congressional testimony last week. Perez said the administration took steps in the final rule to address business concerns: The threshold was lowered from the original proposal of \$50,440. Bonus payments can count toward the threshold. And the rule will have a long phase-in before taking effect Dec. 1.

**HAPPY BIRTHDAY!**

**Times-Herald**  
Start your special day by seeing your name printed in the Times-Herald, the area's best source for local news and advertising. Also, surprise friends and family by sending us their names to be published on their birthdays!

**Submit birthday entries to:**  
**Times-Herald Birthdays,**  
420 Virginia Street, Ste. 2A, Vallejo, CA 94590

**Entries must be received at least 7 DAYS IN ADVANCE to the actual birthday**  
No entries more than 60 days in advance.  
Nicknames & Initials will not be printed.  
**Please print legibly!**  
Illegible entries will be disregarded.

**NO BIRTHDAYS WILL BE TAKEN BY PHONE**

Complete the form below, giving your name or the names of your family members or friends having birthdays next month.

**EACH BIRTHDAY MUST BE SUBMITTED ON SEPARATE ENTRY FORM. Please send only one entry per name.**  
Due to limited space, the birthday list is for residents of Solano or Napa County only.

**BIRTHDAY ENTRY FORM • PLEASE PRINT NEATLY!**

NAME: \_\_\_\_\_

BIRTHDAY: \_\_\_\_\_

PHONE: \_\_\_\_\_

ADDRESS: \_\_\_\_\_

CITY: \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

**BIRTHDAY ENTRY FORM • PLEASE PRINT NEATLY!**

NAME: \_\_\_\_\_

BIRTHDAY: \_\_\_\_\_

PHONE: \_\_\_\_\_

ADDRESS: \_\_\_\_\_

CITY: \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

**GRAND OPENING**  
*Celebration*  
**Capital City Pharmacy**  
Your Neighborhood Pharmacy

**Saturday, May 21 • 3 to 6pm**  
339 Georgia St., Vallejo, (707) 644-2272  
Ribbon cutting by Mayor Osby Davis

**Come join us for a fun time with:**

- Free Snacks, Treats, and Drinks
- Free Blood Pressure Monitoring
- Free Glucose Checks
- CPR Demonstrations

Reception at the  
**Artizen Cultural Arts Center**  
337 Georgia St., Vallejo

**10% OFF**  
Any Store Item

With Prescription Transfer\*  
\*Prescription transfer does not apply to any government sponsored insurance program. Cannot be combined with other offers. Expires 7/22/16

**10% OFF**  
Any Over-the-Counter Allergy Medication\*

\*Cannot be combined with other offers. Expires 7/22/16

**PUBLIC MEETING**  
MARE ISLAND NAVAL SHIPYARD  
RESTORATION ADVISORY BOARD (RAB)  
MAY 2016 MEETING

The Department of Navy (DON) invites interested members of the public to attend updates and presentations with members of the Restoration Advisory Board (RAB) made up of representatives from the local community, Navy, Federal and State regulatory agencies. The DON encourages the public to keep informed about the environmental cleanup at Former Mare Island Naval Shipyard (MINS), Vallejo, California.

**May 2016 Featured Topics**

Former Mare Island Naval Shipyard South Shore Area (SSA) Shoreline Munitions Time-Critical Removal Action (TCRA)

Application for Closure Request Building 144 Oil / Water Separator Site, Installation Restoration Program Site 03, Investigation Area C1 and C3

Date: Thursday, May 26, 2016  
Time: 7:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m.  
Location: Mare Island Conference Center  
375 G St., Vallejo, CA

Ask questions and voice your concerns. You Can Make a Difference!

FOR MORE INFORMATION CONTACT:  
Janet Lear, (415) 524-8924 or Myraa Hayes, (707) 249-9633  
Navy BRAC Web Page: [3333.com/brac2016.asp](http://3333.com/brac2016.asp)  
Mare Island Environmental Web Page: [3333.com/mareid.asp](http://3333.com/mareid.asp)