



CA Dept. of Water Resources: Farmers Use Just Over 40% of State's Water

The Environment Is California's Single Largest Consumer of Water, according to CDWR, Public Policy Institute of California & Northern California Water Association

Contrary to conventional wisdom, farmers account for only about 40 percent of the state's water use once the environment is factored into the equation, according to the California Water Alliance, citing objective data from the California Department of Water Resources (DWR) and other respected water experts.

The **environment receives 50.2% of California water** – nearly 40-million acre-feet – to manage wetlands, meet Delta, stream and river flows, according to DWR.

In contrast, the department found that **just 40.9% of water was allocated to farmers and 8.9% to urban residents.**

"Like all Californians, I care deeply about the environment, but state water policy should be made with the latest scientific metrics – not an old-fashioned model that conveniently ignores the environment's massive appetite for consuming California's water," said Aubrey Bettencourt, executive director of the California Water Alliance (CalWA).

"In an effort to demonize hardworking farmers and portray the environment as neglected, activists are waging a propaganda campaign that perpetuates the grossly misleading and disingenuous claim that farmers hoarding 80 percent of the state's water supply," she said. "That is simply not true."

Bettencourt cited two other highly credible sources that shatter the current myth about how California water is distributed;

- In its 2014 report, "*Just the Facts: Water Use in California*," the highly respected Public Policy Institute of California substantiates the state figures with **50% of water going to the environment**, with just 40% to farmers and 10% for urban use.
- Another 2014 report, by the Northern California Water Foundation, placed **environmental uses for water at 49%**. It also found farmers receive 41% and urban users 10%.

Bettencourt said that the current confusion in water reporting stems in part from how DWR previously reported usage numbers.

“Historically, the California Department of Water Resources only reported on human water usage,” she said. “Under that scenario roughly 80 percent of water went to agriculture and 20 percent went to urban and industrial users.

“Upon establishment of their new reporting system (2007), urban, agricultural *and* environmental water mandates have been included.”

Omitting environmental figures may advance special-interest political agendas but does not reflect reality, she said. “It only serves to create a climate for scapegoating that undermines an honest discussion we should be having about how to achieve solutions that balance all three users: environment, farmers and urban residents.

Bettencourt said that any sincere debate on water allocation should include an understanding and review of the myriad mandates for water allocation earmarked for the environment.

How Much Water Does Urban & Municipal and Agriculture use? What Are The Environmental Mandates?

PPIC - Just The Facts: Water Use in California - July 2014

- 10% - Urban
- 40% - Agricultural
- 50% - Environment
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http://ppic.org/content/pubs/jtf/JTF_WaterUseJTF.pdf

California Department of Water Resources - 2013

- 8.9% - Urban (5.2 million acre-feet)
- 40.9% - Agricultural (40.9 million acre-feet)
- 50.2% - Environmental (50.2 million acre-feet - managed wetlands, required Delta flows, required instream flows and wild and scenic rivers).
- 58.3 million acres-feet - depleted water use in 2010

California Water Plan Update 2013, Public Review Draft, pg. 3-16

http://www.waterplan.water.ca.gov/docs/cwpu2013/Final/04_Vol1_Ch03_Ca_Water_Today.pdf

Northern California Water Association - Statewide Water Use - March 2014

- 10% - Urban
- 41% - Agriculture
- 49% - Environmental
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<http://www.norcalwater.org/2014/03/24/understanding-water-use-in-california-and-the-sacramento-valley/>

Environmental Requirements

California water is sent to more than just farms and urban centers. In the past decade alone there have been numerous federal and state environmental **mandates** requiring millions of

acre-feet to meet instream flows, managed wetlands, ecosystem restoration, also including the Endangered Species Act and the Delta Reform Act.

In a recent interview regarding the Governor's mandatory water reduction, "[a] representative for the agency [Department of Water Resources], Nancy Vogel, said there simply was not enough water to meet all demands. 'There are water quality standards that have to be met...and there are endangered and threatened native fisheries that need to be protected,' she said. **'We need to keep upstream storage in reservoirs for the sake of people and fish in the coming year.'**

<http://fusion.net/story/114463/as-california-goes-dry-latinos-suffer-disproportionately/>

According to California Department of Water Regulation's 13-year average, over 9.1 million acre-feet of water stored in California reservoirs and used for environmental purposes is irretrievably lost to the ocean or other saline basins.

The 2009 Delta Reform Act requires the State Water Resources Control Board to develop new flow criteria needed to protect fish, plant life and provide for ecosystem restoration.

http://www.leginfo.ca.gov/pub/09-10/bill/sen/sb_0001-0050/sbx7_1_bill_20091112_chaptered.html

Fish & Wildlife notes that "'instream flow' is used to designate a specific stream flow, measured in cubic feet per second (cfs), at a particular location for a defined time, and typically follows seasonal variations. Instream flows are needed to protect and preserve resources, such as fish, wildlife and recreation, in a waterway. Instream flow recommendations, based on scientifically defensible assessments, are developed to inform the state regulatory process with respect to water resources. Five riverine components (biology, hydrology, geomorphology, water quality and connectivity) are used to prescribe instream flow through the Instream Flow Incremental Methodology (IFIM) process." https://www.dfg.ca.gov/water/instream_flow.html

California Natural Resources Agency - Mandatory water flows to comply with endangered species law issued by state and federal regulatory agencies: "Over the course of the last decade, populations of several fish species in the Sacramento-San Joaquin River Delta have declined to extremely low levels. In some cases, particularly Delta smelt, these declines have triggered requirements under the U.S. Endangered Species Act and California Endangered Species Act to curtail pumping rates at the federal and state water project pumping facilities in the south Delta."

http://resources.ca.gov/docs/Smelt_QandA.pdf

Has Agriculture Been Spared?

In 2014, over 400,000 acres were fallowed, 17,000 Californians lost their jobs and our economy took \$2.2 billion hit. In 2015, it is estimated that 800,000 acres will be fallowed, and the economic impact will be even greater.

2015 Federal Water Allocation: Zero:

"California's continuing dry conditions have prompted the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation to announce a second year of a zero initial water allocation for many agricultural users north and south of the Delta."

<http://www.acwa.com/news/water-supply-challenges/reclamation-announces-initial-zero-water-allocation-ag-users-north-and->

2015 State Water Allocation: 20%

“The new SWP [State Water Project] allocation of 20 percent replaces the allocation of 15 percent announced on January 15. The initial allocation of 10 percent, made on December 1, was increased after mid-December storms boosted river flows and tight coordination among federal and state water and wildlife-protection agencies allowed the SWP to store runoff south of the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta without violating statutory and regulatory obligations to protect wildlife and water quality.

“The last 100 percent SWP allocation – difficult to achieve even in wet years because of Delta pumping restrictions to protect threatened and endangered fish species – was in 2006. SWP allocations for recent years:

2014 – 5 percent
2013 – 35 percent
2012 – 65 percent
2011 – 80 percent
2010 – 50 percent
2009 – 40 percent
2008 – 35 percent
2007 – 60 percent

<http://www.water.ca.gov/news/newsreleases/2015/030215allocation.pdf>

About CalWA - The California Water Alliance (CalWA) is the leading educational voice and authority on California water. Founded in 2009, CalWA is a non-profit, non-partisan 501c4 that advocates for the water needs of California families, cities, businesses, farmers and the environment.

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