



August 2016

State Drought Orders Ease, but Conservation Still Expected

In June the State of California modified water cutbacks it imposed in 2015. The State Water Resources Control Board updated regulations giving urban water suppliers the ability to set their own standards based on a “stress test” of supply reliability. The City of Brea’s primary water supplies come from the Main San Gabriel Basin via the Cal Domestic Water Company and from the Municipal Water District of Orange County. The City of Brea calculated its conservation goal based on projected shortfalls in the Main San Gabriel Basin if this region continues to receive little or no rain, plus predicted reliability from MWDOC. The City of Brea, in its tradition of responsible and honest environmental stewardship, will pursue a 15% conservation goal in these continuing drought conditions. This allows not only for more predictable supplies, but also more stable water rates.

Water agencies that relaxed conservation targets had to state how they would meet water demands over the coming three-year period in order to avoid a return to State-imposed goals. Most agencies simply indicated that they would increase purchases through the Metropolitan system, which is set to receive a higher import allocation for the coming year from Northern California snowpack and the Colorado River.

The majority of Brea’s water is supplied through Cal Domestic Water Company and the ground water in the Main San Gabriel Basin, and supplemented by purchases through Municipal Water District of Orange County and the Metropolitan state-wide system. The cost per acre-foot of water for Brea, a stockholder in Cal Domestic, is very favorable and is a key control for moderating rates. The cost for imported water is significantly higher. Therefore, if Brea shifted into a higher percentage mix between these two sources, larger rate increases could be triggered.

Brea has determined that its best plan was to maintain a healthy balance through sustainable conservation practices. These already resulted in an overall 18% reduction due to a highly responsive public. While there remains an option to increase purchases through Cal Domestic or MWDOC, the City has chosen to support predictable supplies and more stable water rates for its valued customers.

A number of restrictions remain in place statewide such as those against wasteful practices like runoff. All water providers are still expected to encourage irrigation control and a transition into more drought tolerant landscape palates. The City of Brea intends to do this as it shows leadership for lasting solutions going forward. Phase 2 regulations will remain in place in order to meet its modified goal. By acting to help preserve local water supplies, Brea hopes to have more ability to adjust for future emergencies and allow for healthy growth.