



Article

## Two New Laws Put California on a Long Term Water Diet

*2018 California water laws, AB 1668 and SB 606, usher in a new era of measured, proactive steps to save water long-term, not just during a drought.*

The California drought is officially over. The amount of water collected last winter put the state's reservoirs in decent shape with several of them at or above average. But the largest water source, the Sierra snowpack, measured at only 52 percent of average. As we enter a "new normal" characterized by greater weather extremes, the desire to use water carefully remains.

Two 2018 California water laws recently signed by Governor Jerry Brown take proactive approaches to state water management. They establish efficiency targets through 2030 and examine population, landscape, climate, and other factors that affect water use. Since 2010, smart irrigation technology has been required in California for new or rehabilitated landscapes over 2,500 square feet. This technology uses either evapotranspiration (ET) weather or soil moisture sensor data to modify irrigation schedules. The new legislation requires all landscapes larger than 10,000 square feet to have a dedicated meter. That will allow them to be evaluated against the 2010 Model Water Efficient Landscape Ordinance (MWELO) standard.

### Data Collection to Customize Water Efficiency Targets

Over the next 18 months, a small plane will fly above California, recording data on size and type of landscaped areas. Using the data, customized water efficiency targets based on area, plant type, and climate will be shared with districts so that water can be managed more effectively. The data will also enable state officials to easily identify communities "that are egregiously wasting water," according to Tracy Quinn, a water policy analyst with the Natural Resources Defense Council. She says the bills "should result in greater savings" than a 2009 law that required water agencies to cut water use 20 percent by 2020, but it's really not clear how much additional water this will save.<sup>1</sup>

It's a radical departure from the previous, reactive approach to water management such as the water emergency called in 2015, resulting in a mandatory 25 percent cutback. The two new laws are designed to get Californians to use water more wisely even when there's not a drought.

"There was a lot of discomfort with how (the California State Water Resources Control Board) handled the last drought," said Quinn, when they told each city and water agency how much to cut back. Some cities had to cut as much as 36 percent below their 2013 baseline.<sup>1</sup>

Assemblywoman Laura Friedman, author of AB 1668 said, “this isn’t about asking everyone to use less water. Communities that are already using water wisely will not have to do anything different. It’s about increasing efficiency, so we have more to go around. By addressing leaky pipes, outdated appliances, and other hidden inefficiencies, we can ensure everyone has what they need for washing, drinking, and gardening.”<sup>2</sup>

## Smart Water Solutions

Fortunately, with smart water management technology available, it’s easy to stop wasting water. Baseline offers smart irrigation controllers that use soil moisture data to automatically calculate watering schedules on a daily basis. That means that landscapes receive just the right amount of water every day. Another smart device, the flow monitor, can detect very small leaks and send alerts to a mobile device. The controller can also automatically shut off valves if the leak reaches a certain threshold to minimize water waste.

Sources:

1. [Indoor use limits, water budgets and aerial data gathering: California’s plan to wean us off water waste](#)
2. [The drought is back. Here’s how California needs to start saving water now](#)

Baseline, a HydroPoint brand, provides irrigation and water management solutions built on responsive real-time technology. Baseline features cloud-based central control, dynamic flow optimization, intelligent controllers, and smart watering technologies. Baseline is EPA WaterSense certified and has been helping school districts, parks, cities, sports parks, commercial and government entities conserve water, optimize resources, and simplify water management since 1998.



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