

Era of Efficiency

Last month, California Gov. Jerry Brown made an important announcement while standing in the middle of a field in the Sierra Nevada—an unusual spot for a politician to make a speech, you may think. Brown picked that spot for a reason, though—the dry, brownish grass he stood on should have been buried beneath 5 ft of snow.

The speech I refer to, of course, is Brown's announcement of his executive order imposing the state's first-ever mandatory water use reductions. California is in the midst of a years-long drought, and there is no end in sight. Brown made the speech on April 1 in Phillips, Calif., where an annual measurement of the Sierra Nevada snowpack—a major source of that state's drinking water—is made. Where there would normally be 5 ft of snow at that time of year, there was none. According to a *New York Times* article, state officials estimate that state-wide, the snowpack is at 6% of normal levels.

Brown's executive order directs the State Water Resources Control Board to implement restrictions to reduce water use by 25%—approximately 1.5 million acre-ft—through the remainder of 2015. It will be the responsibility of local water supply agencies to set restrictions and monitor compliance.

The restrictions will affect residents, businesses and industry alike. The order especially targets outdoor water use, with provisions to replace lawns with drought-tolerant plants, require major landscaping water users like golf courses and



cemeteries to reduce water use, and prohibit new homes and development from irrigating with potable water unless they use efficient drip irrigation systems. On the indoor side, there will be a temporary rebate program for consumers who purchase new, water-efficient appliances.

"People should realize we are in a new era," Brown said at a press conference, according to the *New York Times* article. "The idea of your nice little green lawn getting water every day, those days are past."

We can only hope that precipitation returns to California and the era of mandatory reductions can come to an end. But the lessons learned during this era about water efficiency and conservation are ones that should not be forgotten, both in California and across the U.S. Manufacturers, industry and construction already are taking these lessons to heart, as more efficient water treatment systems are produced, companies implement water efficiency and reuse initiatives, and buildings incorporate water-efficient fixtures and practices. Whether in a drought or not, everyone can do his or her part to conserve and protect our water resources.

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