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STRETCHING THE WATER SUPPLY

Even as the available supply of water in California remains fixed, the state’s increasing demand means water suppliers and water users must do all they can to squeeze the most use from each precious drop of water. This necessity becomes even more evident in years when drought conditions exist and the water supply is precariously balanced between urban, agricultural and environmental demands.

Water conservation is an essential tool to stretch the water supply – or more accurately, to use the existing supply more efficiently.

Water conservation is an essential tool to stretch the water supply – or more accurately, to use the existing supply more efficiently. Urban and agriculture conservation measures could reduce demand by about 1.2 million acre-feet, according to the California Department of Water Resources (DWR). Conservation helped many communities pull through the 1987-1993 drought. In 1991, several urban water agencies achieved a 25 percent reduction in water use from 1987 levels.

Urban water suppliers have developed and implemented water conservation practices known as Best Management Practices (BMPs). These include the installation of water-saving plumbing fixtures and water meters on all new construction, public information programs, municipal landscape water conservation requirements and financial incentives to reduce water use. DWR estimates that following urban BMPs could reduce annual water demand by 900,000 acre-feet by 2020.

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