

Poll: More Californians want mandatory water rationing

By Christopher Cadelago, Sacramento Bee

Amid stubborn drought conditions, more Californians are warming to the prospect of government-imposed mandatory water rationing, but a majority still favor the state's current approach of urging residents to voluntarily curtail their water use.

Support for rationing swelled to more than a third of voters in the latest statewide Field Poll, a rise of 7 percentage points since last spring. Support is greatest in the Bay Area and other parts of Northern California.

Meantime, an increasing number of voters think that the state is experiencing a severe water shortage. Ninety-four percent describe the situation as "serious," with nearly seven in 10 characterizing it as "extremely serious." To put that in perspective, when the state was in another long-term water shortage in 1977, far fewer voters (51 percent) described their feelings at the time as "extremely serious."

"You can see that as the seriousness of the situation seems to be expanding in the public's view, it's willing to start making more trade-offs in certain areas than it was willing to do before," said Mark DiCamillo, the director of the poll. "As the shortage continues, we'll see how far voters are willing to go."

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