

# Calif. water use fell 13.5% in April

By Associated Press

Ordered to use a fourth less water during this record drought, Californians managed to get about halfway to their goal in April, regulators announced Tuesday.

California residents reduced overall water usage by 13.5 percent compared to the same month in the benchmark year of 2013, water officials said.

That's the second-best conservation achievement since state officials started closely tracking water use more than a year ago, but falls short of the 25 percent cuts Gov. Jerry Brown that became mandatory for cities and towns on June 1.

"Local communities are stepping up in a way they weren't before, and I'm hoping that's why we are starting to see the uptick" in conservation, said Felicia Marcus, chairwoman of the state Water Resources Control Board, which compiles usage reports from more than 400 water agencies around California.

"The real challenge is, we really have to step it up for the summer months," Marcus said. "If we miss the summer, we are toast."

April's still-lackluster achievement could set off more alarm bells about the severity of California's drought and the need for much more conservation.

This year's snowpack in the Sierra Nevada is dismal, with surveyors on April 1 finding the lowest-ever water level up in the mountains. Brown used that grim news as a backdrop when he announced sweeping and unprecedented conservation measures.