

Water conservation comes with unintended consequences

By Matt Stevens, Los Angeles Times

Under orders to slash water use amid a historic drought, cities and towns across the state saved about 75 billion gallons in July, eclipsing Gov. Jerry Brown's once-daunting order for a 25% reduction.

But, in a paradox of conservation, water agencies say the unprecedented savings – 31% in July over July 2013 – are causing or compounding a slew of problems.

Sanitation districts are yanking tree roots out of manholes and stepping up maintenance on their pipes to prevent corrosion and the spread of odors. And when people use less potable water, officials say, there's less wastewater available to recycle.

Water suppliers, meanwhile, say the dramatic decrease in consumption has created multimillion-dollar revenue shortfalls.

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