

California misses water conservation target



Even though the snowpack in late March was high on Highway 88 east of Kirkwood, it isn't enough to provide California with all the water it needs. Photo/LTN

By Associated Press

Residents of drought-plagued California fell just short in February of the state's mandated water conservation target that has forced them to let lawns turn brown, flush toilets less often and take other strict measures, officials said Monday.

Residents statewide used 23.9 percent less water in February compared to the same period in 2013. The savings were shy of the 25 percent water cuts that Gov. Jerry Brown ordered last year for users in cities and towns.

Felicia Marcus, chair of the State Water Resources Control Board, called it an "enormous effort" in saving water, despite the missed target.

“Californians rose to the occasion, reducing irrigation, fixing leaks, taking shorter showers and saving our precious water resources in all sorts of ways,” she said.

February was the ninth and final month of reporting under the governor’s 25 percent savings mandate. Californians will now be required to use at least 20 percent less water.

The state is now in the fifth year of drought, even though an El Nino weather system delivered a near-average year of rain and snow in some parts of the state.

State officials say that might impact the outcome of a workshop planned later this month to consider the best approach for conservation.

Key reservoirs in Northern California are brimming after El Nino storms drenched the region. However, Southern California saw relatively little precipitation, leaving most of its reservoirs low.

By April 1 – typically the end of California’s rain and snow season – the state was left with a nearly average snowpack and few hopes of more significant storms.

“We need people to keep saving,” Marcus said.