

Calif. beats water conservation targets in April

By Associated Press

SAN FRANCISCO – Californians once again beat the state's drought-time order for water savings in April – one of the last months before officials transition from a statewide conservation order to more localized targets, a state agency said Monday.

The average Californian used 77 gallons of water a day in April, down 26.1 percent from 104 gallons in April 2013, the state Water Resources Control Board said.

The agency has been the top conservation monitor and enforcer during California's five years of drought.

California in April marked its 11th month of mandatory water conservation of up to 25 percent for cities and towns.

El Nino storms this winter brought near-normal rain and snow to Northern California but not the southern part of the state.

Starting this month, California will switch to a system that will let local water agencies lift conservation requirements if they can prove they have enough water to get through three more years of possible drought.

State water board chairwoman Felicia Marcus called the localized conservation orders the "show-me-the-water model."

"I do want to be clear if this approach doesn't work we are prepared to call folks on it," Marcus told reporters.

Under the new system, water districts unable to show they have enough water for three more years' of drought must conserve by a corresponding amount.

Water agencies that are 20 percent short on water, for example, would be told to keep their water use 20 percent below pre-drought levels.

After 11 months of conservation, Californians have saved enough water to supply 18 percent of the state's nearly 40 million people for a year.