

Water conservation slipping in California

By Paul Rogers, Bay Area News Group

As California suffers through another dry winter, increasing fears that drought conditions may be returning, the state's residents are dropping conservation habits that were developed during the last drought and steadily increasing their water use with each passing month.

A new analysis of state water records by this news organization found California's urban residents used 13.7 percent less water last year in the first eight months after Gov. Jerry Brown declared an end to the drought emergency than they used in the same eight-month period in 2013. But in each of those eight months last year, the water savings dropped from 20 percent in May to 2.8 percent in an unseasonably dry December.

"We are having a very dry winter again," said Heather Cooley, water program director at the Pacific Institute, an Oakland nonprofit that studies water use patterns. "That wet winter we saw last year could have been one wet winter in a 10-to-12 year drought period. We have to be very cautious about our water use."

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