



# Water Conservation San Diego County Freeways

## FACT SHEET

### GOALS

Manage water usage responsibly and efficiently;

Use recycled water when possible;

Create sustainable landscapes on highway roadsides and

Exceed state and local conservation conformity measures.



### CONTACT

Public Information Office  
(619) 688-6670  
ct.public.information.d11@dot.ca.gov

Caltrans  
4050 Taylor Street  
San Diego, CA 92110  
www.dot.ca.gov/d11



FOLLOW US ON [twitter](#)  
@SDCaltrans

### THE NEW NORMAL

Caltrans recognizes its responsibility to lead by example as drought conditions continue throughout California. It is doing more than ever before to continue a consistent, downward trend in water usage along its state highway landscaping and to exceed state and local mandated requirements.

Caltrans is responsible for maintaining nearly 4,000 acres of highway landscaping in the region. This landscaping can provide for a scenic drive, but it also serves to prevent erosion, serves as a fire break and functions as a privacy screen for adjacent residents. Caltrans is saving water by expanding the use of native and drought-tolerant plants, using mulch and rockscape options, installing "smart" irrigation systems that optimize water usage and the use of recycled water.

### ON THE ROAD TO BEING WATER WISE

There were notable steps taken in recent years to reduce highway landscape water use in the region, and more options are being explored as restrictions tighten. These accomplishments include:

- Upgrading irrigation controllers that are operated through a computer-based Central Control System. The system includes high-flow detection to identify breaks and responds with an automatic turn off;

- Collection of data to measure how much moisture is lost from a plant based on weather conditions;

- Automatic shut-down of the irrigation schedule during rainy weather. Irrigation controllers not on Central Control still need to be manually turned off by maintenance crews or contractors;

- Using native and drought-tolerant plants to reduce long-term water usage and maintenance;

- Working with maintenance forces and construction contractors to improve irrigation practices and repair irrigation breaks;

Stopped irrigation of turf grasses and lawns at roadside rest areas, highway maintenance yards and truck inspection facilities;

Programmed controllers for less frequent irrigation and nighttime irrigation;

Placed mulch to reduce landscape water loss due to evaporation;

Stopped on-site washing of department vehicles, except where it would present a potential health and safety issue to the driver or the traveling public;

Replaced or upgraded irrigation controllers to “smart” technology;

Replaced inefficient sprinkler heads and ineffective automatic remote control valves and

Replaced highway maintenance station and roadside rest area faucets, urinals and toilets with more efficient, low water-flow systems.

## **RECYCLED WATER**

Caltrans uses recycled water where it is provided by its water suppliers. It continues to work with suppliers to expand the network of recycled water lines.

Plans for recycled water use include installing lines to large segments of Interstate 5 (I-5) North Coast Corridor, Interstate 805 (I-805), State Route 163 and State Route 56. There are also plans to expand recycled water use in the southern part of the county as projects develop on I-5, I-805 and State Route 905.

## **MITIGATION SITES**

Various environmental permitting agencies require Caltrans and its partners to build wetlands and other habitats as environmental mitigation for the construction of transportation projects. Often times these sites require irrigation to establish habitats.

Caltrans and the permitting agencies negotiate the required level of mitigation in accordance with the California Environmental Quality Act, National Environmental Policy Act, the Clean Water Act, the Endangered Species Act and the California Coastal Act.

The basic thought is that when Caltrans builds a project and if that project creates impacts, the department complies with its commitments to mitigate those impacts. Sometimes the mitigation may create impacts of its own, such as irrigation, and the department balances this need with water reductions in other areas.

## **HOW THE PUBLIC CAN HELP**

Motorists and residents are encouraged to report broken highway sprinklers or other water system failures to the Caltrans Public Information Office at (619) 688-6670. They may also fill out a maintenance service request online at [www.dot.ca.gov/dist11](http://www.dot.ca.gov/dist11).