California’s Emergency Drought Declaration Is Lifted
State advances measures to make conservation a way of life

California Under Drought
Climate change means increasingly extreme and unpredictable weather. We have seen record-high temperatures and record-low precipitation during this historic five-year drought.

Frequent, large storms this fall and winter eased drought conditions across California. Most major reservoirs have recovered, and an above-average snowpack will feed lakes well into summer. For the most part, the severely dry conditions that afflicted much of the state since 2012 are gone.

Learning from the Drought
California faces challenges from climate change and a growing population. We have learned from the drought and incorporated these lessons into the state’s Water Action Plan, a five-year roadmap for sustainable water management.

A few components of the Plan:

Conservation as a way of life: Reducing statewide water usage is necessary to ensure the resilience of our water supplies for increasingly severe and frequent droughts. That’s why the state bolstered the Save Our Water campaign, offered rebates to retrofit tens of thousands of inefficient toilets, replaced 50 million square feet of turf with drought-tolerant landscapes, required agricultural water management plans and more.

Sustainable Groundwater Management Act (SGMA): During times of drought, many communities depend on groundwater supplies. But over reliance has led to a rapid depletion of this critical water source. Groundwater aquifers need to be replenished. SGMA provides a regulatory framework for sustainable, local groundwater management for the first time in California history.

Improve Drinking Water: Millions of Californians, especially those in disadvantaged communities, rely in part on unsafe drinking water. California has improved the organization of our water quality programs and created new tools to ensure every Californian has access to clean, safe, and affordable water.

Restoring Important Ecosystems: Prolonged drought also affects the state’s fish and wildlife, exposing and exacerbating population vulnerabilities. The state invested tens of millions of dollars in habitat restoration projects designed to address immediate drought concerns and increase resiliency to climate change.

Real-time Management of Water Project Operations: Especially in drought conditions, real-time management can have substantial fishery, water quality, and water supply benefits. To improve water supply reliability and consequently improve drought preparedness, the state increased the flexibility of its water infrastructure to ensure adequate levels in reservoirs, manage water temperatures for fish upstream, develop salinity barriers to protect fresh water and more.

Investing in Drought Solutions
The state has deployed numerous resources—fiscal, logistical, and personnel—in responding to the impacts of the drought. This includes Proposition 1, which was passed by a 67% majority of California voters in 2014. It authorized $7.5 billion in general obligation bonds to fund ecosystem and watershed protection and restoration, and water supply infrastructure projects, including surface and groundwater storage and drinking water protection.

While the emergency drought declaration has been lifted, the state should maintain directives that promote a sustainable water future and prohibit wasteful practices.
Governor Brown has signed...  
7 Gubernatorial Actions  
— and —  
24 drought bills

These actions address immediate health, safety and ecosystem needs while also accelerating improvements to water infrastructure and habitat that will have a permanent effect on our ability to withstand drought.