



IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Drought-Stricken State Faces Uncertain Future; New Online Game Asks You to Plan CA's Water Future

New Field Research Corporation poll:

Voters favor fining water wasters, but most not swayed by rate hikes

SAN FRANCISCO — As the state faces severe drought conditions, [Next 10](http://www.Next10.org) (www.Next10.org) issues a new challenge to Californians: Can you create a plan to make sure there's enough water for us all? Today the nonprofit, nonpartisan organization launches the new [California Water Challenge](http://www.cawaterchallenge.org) (www.cawaterchallenge.org), an online simulation tool that lets users create a unique plan to meet the increasing demands on the state's limited water supplies.

"In many regions across California, long-term water demands may go unmet unless we take action," said F. Noel Perry, founder of Next 10. "We all have a stake in figuring out how to conserve, recycle or produce more of one of our most precious natural resources."

Many of the strategies highlighted in the new nonpartisan California Water Challenge are either currently being considered or have been considered in the past at the state and/or local level. Strategies in the Challenge, along with background information and arguments for and against, include:

- Increasing residential water rates by 20 percent
- Retiring irrigated farmlands
- Building seawater desalination plants
- Expanding cloud seeding projects
- Repairing and upgrading water infrastructure

In addition, the Challenge lets users weigh in on current proposals, such as:

- Adopting mandatory reductions in water use for residents and businesses
- Fining water wasters
- Adopting a \$7.5 billion water bond for water conservation, recycling and storage projects

As users work through the game selecting water conservation, storage, and production strategies, the Water Challenge provides information about the benefits and challenges of each strategy. The online simulation tool also measures and tallies up how these strategies impact the water gap, how much they cost, as well as how the strategies impact energy use and the environment. Users can invite others to take the Challenge via Facebook and Twitter.



New polling from the Field Research Corporation finds that a strong majority of California voters — 76 percent — favor fining residential water wasters. When broken out by region, the Bay Area had the highest percentage of fine backers (80.8 percent supported fines) and the Inland Empire reported the lowest support for fines (69.2 percent supported fines). And, voters of both parties supported charging water wasters, with Democrats backing them more strongly (80.7 percent) than Republicans (70.9 percent).

When asked what affect raising water rates by 20 percent (or about \$14 per month for the average household) would have, most voters (55.9 percent) reported the rate hike would have little or no impact on their usage. Conversely, 38.5 percent said a rate increase would cause them to use “somewhat less” or “a lot less” water. Somewhat larger proportions of voters in the South Coast (42.9 percent), Los Angeles County (41.6 percent) and Central Valley (41.4 percent) regions than voters elsewhere report that raising water rates would cause them to use less water.ⁱ

Currently Californians use 196 gallons per day — that’s the 15th highest rate of consumption per capita in the nation.

“The current drought is already amongst the worst in California’s history, and it isn’t over yet,” said Mark Svoboda, a climatologist at the [National Drought Mitigation Center](#). “The state is short more than a year’s worth of water and supply will continue to fall until the upcoming winter.”

Although drought is not the sole cause of our unmet water demand, severe or prolonged drought can certainly widen the distance between how much water we demand in California and how much is available. By 2030, the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation estimates that California may have an annual unmet water demand of between one-point-five and two trillion gallons of water each year.

“Local water agencies across the state are issuing alerts for conservation and some are even placing mandatory restrictions on water use. This problem is not going away,” said Perry. “The Water Challenge helps Californians to understand the tough choices ahead and the strategies that they’ll be asked to consider.”

The new [California Water Challenge](#) is one of the online tools Next 10 produces, including [The California Budget Challenge](#), [The California Carbon Challenge](#), [The Federal Budget Challenge](#), [Compare50.org](#) and [California Choices](#), that foster a deeper understanding of the critical issues affecting all citizens.

Resources:

- **Bloggers and web editors:** Need a colorful California Water Challenge graphic? Contact Roxanna Smith at 415.453.0430.
- Think you are already a water expert? Take the California Water Challenge Quiz for the chance to win \$100 Visa Gift Card. Take the quiz [here](#).



- Students from across the state, including middle and high schools in San Diego, Fairfield, and Los Angeles, were selected as the winners of Next 10's Water Challenge art contest. See the winning selections [here](#).
- Check out the California Water Challenge digital billboard on San Gabriel Freeway in Los Angeles and near the Bay Bridge toll plaza in Oakland.

Next 10 is an independent, nonpartisan organization focused on innovation and the intersection of the economy, the environment, and quality of life issues for all Californians. Next 10 funds research by leading experts on complex state issues.

ⁱ Nearly 1300 registered voters were surveyed for the poll August 14-28, 2014, which reports a +3.2% percent margin of error at the 95% confidence level. The survey was administered in six languages: English, Spanish, Cantonese, Mandarin, Korean, and Vietnamese.