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## NEW STATEWIDE SURVEY SHOWS CALIFORNIANS AWARE OF DROUGHT, WILLING TO CONSERVE

SAN JOSE, May 11 – A recent statewide survey of California residents found that 78% knew that Governor Schwarzenegger had declared California to be in a state of drought, and 79% of residents said that they would be likely or very likely to comply with a 15% reduction in water use this summer.

When asked what would motivate them to conserve water this summer, environmental concerns and saving money were more important than a request by local government. Sixty-four percent of Californians said that environmental concerns were very important in influencing them to take additional actions to conserve water; 60% said that saving money was a very important motivation, and just 45% said that a request by local government was a very important factor.

Table 1	
"How important would each of the following factors be in influencing whether or not you took additional actions to conserve water this summer?"	
	% "Very Important"
Environmental concerns	64%
Saving money	60%
Request by local government	45%

## WIDESPREAD MISPERCEPTIONS ABOUT WATER USE

When asked who they thought uses the most water in California, 46% of residents did not know that agriculture is the biggest user of water in the state. Only one in four Californians was correctly able to identify agriculture as the state's largest consumer, with 27% of respondents thinking that the biggest user was single-family homes, and 19% thinking it was industry.

"The survey results indicate that local agencies and media have been successful at getting the word out about the drought, and that residents are willing to conserve," says Katherine Cushing, an Associate Professor of Environmental Studies at San Jose State University, who developed the questions for the survey, "But at the same time, Californians lack important knowledge about water use in the state and opportunities for conservation among the different segments of water consumers."

## ECONOMIC DOWNTURN ASSOCIATED WITH SHIFTS IN CALIFORNIANS' "GREEN" BEHAVIOR

According to the same survey, conducted by the Survey and Policy Research Institute at San Jose State University in April, 58% of Californians said that they were engaging in energy or water-conserving behaviors more frequently since last fall's stock market crash. In addition, 45% of Californians reported driving fewer miles in their car in recent months.

"These findings are similar across income and gender," explained San Jose State University Environmental Studies professor Katherine Cushing, "Behavioral changes like these are consistent with saving money, which makes intuitive sense during a recession."

At the same time, the economic downturn has not seemed to slow consumer purchasing of organic food and other "green" products, such as paper towels made from recycled paper. Thirty-seven percent of Californians reported buying "green" consumer products more often since the downturn, and only 12% said they were buying such products less often.

Regarding the purchase of organic food, the fastest growing segment of the food industry, results were mixed. While 20% of Californians said that they were buying organic food more often, 16% said they were buying organic food less often. These results were similar across income level and region. Consumers with an annual household income of \$50,000 or less were the most likely to have made a shift to buying green. Additionally, respondents with a high school degree or less were the most likely to report purchasing organic food more often.

	More often	Less often	About the same
Water or energy conservation at home	58%	5%	35%
Driving fewer miles per week	45	14	38
Reducing air travel	26	21	45
Purchasing other "green" products	37	12	47
Purchasing organic or natural food	20	16	58

According to Cushing, several factors could explain these results. "First, the price of organic and green products are becoming more competitive with their conventional counterparts. Additionally, even with higher prices, such as organic versus non-organic milk, consumers may value the benefits of green and organic products and are willing to pay more for them even during hard economic times. And third, organic and green products are now much more widely available than they were a year ago. People no longer have to go to specialty or high-end grocery stores to buy green. Even in your neighborhood Safeway or Lucky's, shoppers can easily find organic or natural products without any extra effort." The results also indicate that the demographic variables researchers have often associated with pro-environmental behaviors, such as household income and education level, may not be as predictive as they have in the past. Says Cushing, "Traditionally, pro-environmental behaviors have been linked with higher education levels and higher income levels. Results from this study suggest that these relationships may be changing."

## ABOUT THE SURVEY

The Survey and Policy Research Institute at San José State University conducted the Spring 2009 SPRI Omnibus Survey March 30-April 10, 2009. This telephone survey of 408 California adults was conducted in English and Spanish, and contained questions on several different topics including consumer attitudes, political issues, and environmental attitudes.

Telephone numbers were randomly generated by computer to ensure that both listed and unlisted numbers were included, from all landline exchanges in California. Telephone numbers in the survey sample were called up to four times on different days at different times to increase the likelihood of reaching eligible households.

The sampling error is plus or minus 4.85 percentage points at the 95% confidence level. Results were statistically weighted by race and gender to match recent U.S. Census estimates of the California population.

## SURVEY QUESTIONS AND RESULTS

1. On our final topic, are you aware that Governor Schwarzenegger has declared California to be in a state of drought?

Yes	78%
No	21
Don't know	1

2. Which of the following groups do you think uses the most water in California?  
*[options rotated]*

Single family homes	27%
Industry	19
Agriculture	41
Don't know	13

3. How likely are you to observe local government's call for reducing water use by 15% at home?

Very likely	54%
Somewhat likely	25
Neither likely nor unlikely	5
Very unlikely	3
Somewhat unlikely	8
Don't know	4

How important would each of the following factors be in influencing whether or not you took additional actions to conserve water this summer?

4a. Environmental concerns

Very important	64%
Somewhat important	24
Neither important nor unimportant	3
Somewhat unimportant	2
Very unimportant	3
Don't know	2

4b. Request by local government

Very important	45%
Somewhat important	32
Neither important nor unimportant	8
Somewhat unimportant	6
Very unimportant	7
Don't know	2

4c. Saving money

Very important	60%
Somewhat important	23
Neither important nor unimportant	6
Somewhat unimportant	5
Very unimportant	5
Don't know	1

Next, I'm going to read a list of behaviors to you. Please tell me if you are engaging in each behavior more often, less often, or about the same since the stock market crash that occurred last fall.

5a. Purchasing organic or natural food at the grocery store

More often	20%
About the same	58
Less often	16
Don't know	5

5b. Engaging in water or energy conservation behaviors at home (for example, setting the thermostat lower, or taking shorter showers)

More often	58%
About the same	35
Less often	5
Don't know	1

5c. Driving fewer miles per week in your car

More often	45%
About the same	38
Less often	14
Don't know	3

5d. Reducing air travel

More often	26%
About the same	45
Less often	21
Don't know	7

5e. Purchasing other "green" consumer products (for example, clothes washing detergent, paper towels, and shampoo)

More often	37%
About the same	47
Less often	12
Don't know	4