Stanford researchers found that high media coverage contributed to water conservation during the recent historic drought in California. The team used a novel search algorithm to discover that while California's 2007-2009 drought received little attention from the news, the recent drought received unprecedented coverage and correspondingly high public interest, especially during prominent events. By incorporating news reports in water-demand modeling, they were able to demonstrate the triangular relationship between media coverage, public awareness, and water conservation.

Looking at Two Droughts, Models Suggest That News Media Coverage Is a Driver of Water Conservation

Researchers searched nine large-circulation national and state newspapers for articles mentioning or discussing drought or water-related issues in California.