

News from the New Hampshire Department of Environmental Services

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NHDES Urge Residents to Conserve Water in Drought Areas

Concord, NH - A combination of a below average snowpack in the spring, little precipitation to recharge the groundwater, an increase of evapotranspiration in the summer, and the inability of New Hampshire watersheds to store large volumes of water due to their geology has landed the northern half of the state in abnormally dry conditions and the southern half in severe drought. During the July 22, 2016 meeting of the New Hampshire Drought Management Team (DMT), State Climatologist, Mary Stampone, indicated that relief was not in the near future and drought conditions will likely persist into the fall. As a result of the current conditions and the long-term forecast, the New Hampshire Department of Environmental Services (NHDES) is urging New Hampshire residents to conserve water as long as drought conditions persist.

To protect water supplies, over one hundred public water systems in New Hampshire have implemented outdoor water use restrictions or bans in their service areas. If you reside in an area of severe drought, which currently includes the following counties: Belknap, Cheshire, Hillsborough, Merrimack, Strafford and Sullivan, and your water supplier has not issued a restriction or if you are a private homeowner on your own well, NHDES urges you to refrain from using water outdoors except for hand watering of vegetable gardens until precipitation mitigates drought conditions. For counties experiencing abnormally dry conditions, including Grafton, Carroll, and Coos counties, NHDES recommends outdoor water use be limited to watering every other day and to between the hours of 7pm and 8am. Saving water for essential uses, such as drinking, cooking and cleaning of clothes and dishes and limiting non-essential uses such as watering of lawns is the most effective way to sustain water supplies until enough rain is received to replenish water sources.

The last significant drought the state experienced was between 2001 and 2003. Since then, many changes have been made to help mitigate drought conditions. Water suppliers have invested in backup supplies, including emergency interconnections with other water suppliers, and adopted water restrictions; the Water Conservation Program at NHDES was created; and legislation was enacted to allow municipalities to quickly implement residential lawn watering bans on public and private supplies. "Lessons have been learned from past droughts and tools have been put in place to help avoid water shortage emergencies, but we really are at the mercy of the weather" states Stacey Herbold, NHDES Water Conservation Program. "The fact is there is nothing we can do to replenish our water supplies. There is no rainmaker. For now, the best we can do is limit our use to essentials and let the lawn go dormant until rainier days come."

For updates on drought conditions and outdoor water use restrictions; water efficiency tips; and drought guidance for municipalities, public water systems, and homeowners, visit www.des.nh.gov and scroll through the "A-Z List" to the "Drought Management Program."