

Weekly Drought Report September 10, 2010

Due to the lack of rainfall over the past 30 days, 90-day departure from normal precipitation deficits have essentially doubled for many of the counties in the western part of the state as well as counties in the southeast. For the remainder of the state, precipitation was either slightly above or slightly below normal for the past 30-days. Since last month, the number of counties in a drought watch/warning/emergency indicator status over a 90-day period has grown from 13 to 43 counties.

A review of the county monitoring gages indicates that the 30-day average streamflow values have declined during the past month in 13 counties scattered between the southwest corner and southcentral portions of the state. There was a slight improvement to 8 counties in the northeast to the point that the drought indicators returned to normal status. Based on the snapshot of the instantaneous streamflows, flows are below normal in many areas across the state.

Ground water levels in five counties in the northeast have shown a modest improvement over the past month (Bradford, Carbon, Columbia, Luzerne and Wayne) while levels declined in 8 counties (Dauphin, Fayette, Juniata, Lawrence, Lebanon, Mercer, Perry and Somerset).

The Weekly Palmer Drought Severity Index (soil moisture) is now showing 7 regions with a drought indicator of “watch”, which is an increase from 5 regions last month.

The 7-day forecast indicates the western half of the state to receive a possible 1.0 inch of precipitation; the remainder of the state trace amounts. The 8–14 day forecast predicts most of the state to receive precipitation in the 1.0 inch range and up to 2 inches in the northwest corner.

In summary, overall conditions have deteriorated as precipitation deficits expand predominantly into the western and southeastern sections of the state. Slight improvements in a segment of groundwater wells and streamflow levels in the northeast have lessened the decline that has been experienced in the northeast over the past several months. Dry conditions have been experienced most of the summer for many areas of the state with the past month of above normal temperatures and large reduction in rainfall exacerbating conditions.

A Statewide Drought Task Force meeting has been scheduled for Sept. 16 to discuss current conditions. A drought watch/warning declaration is recommended at this time based upon the current monitoring conditions. It would signal to water users to begin planning for reduced supplies should the precipitation deficits continue to build.