

August 22, 2011 Drought Report

Precipitation

Precipitation amounts over the past 7 days across the state range from trace amounts up to about 5" with the greatest amounts occurring in the Philadelphia and Pittsburgh areas. Despite the precipitation on the short term, the 90- day precipitation deficits have increased in parts of the state. Several additional north-central counties have moved into a departure range between 26 and 50% below average and several counties in the south-central region from average to 25% below average departures.

Surface Water

A review of the US Geological Survey (USGS) County monitoring gages indicates that the 30-day average streamflow values reflect the rainfall that has fallen over the past few days. Most counties previously in a drought status have shown improvement except for Warren and Fulton Counties which continue to decline. There are now 7 counties in Drought Watch and 1 in Drought Warning.

The snapshot of instantaneous streamflows indicates above normal flows across the eastern portion of the state, with flows ranging from above normal to below normal across central and western portions of the state.

Groundwater

The trend lines for the 30-day moving average of groundwater levels continued as in last week's report with well levels continuing to lower, others bottoming out. Potter County remains in Emergency indicator with Juniata in Warning. Due to higher level of precipitation, a number of wells in the east show increased levels.

Water Suppliers

Since last week, 1 additional water supplier (located in Bradford County) has implemented voluntary conservation as a precautionary measure. There are now a total of 13 systems statewide implementing restrictions.

Forecast

The forecast for the next 7 days shows a higher probability of substantial precipitation for the southeast corner in the range between 4 and 6" with the rest of the state forecast between a half and 1". The forecast between August 30 and September 7 calls for moderate levels between a half inch and 2" predicted for the more south-central part of the state.

Summary

Due to the rainfall over the past several weeks, conditions have improved in the eastern half of the state where the heaviest precipitation has occurred. Unfortunately, even though the northcentral portion of the state has shown some improvement to surface water flows, the 90-day precipitation deficits continue to increase in this area, with some of the highest deficits in counties under a drought warning (Elk 4.7", Cameron and Potter 3.9").

A Drought Task Force meeting is scheduled for September 1 to discuss conditions. If meaningful and sustained precipitation continues to be received and improvement is seen in the drought monitoring indicators, a recommendation may be made to remove the drought watch declaration for affected areas of the state.