

May 2, 2017

Drought Report

Summary: April 25 – May 2, 2017

Overall, the Commonwealth has been seeing gradual recovery of drought indicators. While some counties today could qualify for a change in drought declaration status back to “normal” level, there is a great potential with precipitation forecast for the end of this week for additional counties with indicators in a stable normal range to move over the next two weeks from the current “watch” status to “normal” status.

Precipitation during the last seven days was below normal in the Susquehanna River Basin and the Middle and Upper Delaware River Basin with the remainder of the state ranging from normal to above normal. Groundwater and surface water recovery during the last seven days was limited to those areas with above normal precipitation. The 30-day streamflow plots remained in the “Normal” range during the last week except for one county which moved to drought “Watch” (Philadelphia); also, the status of the 30-day groundwater plots did not change during the last week except for one county which moved from drought “Warning” to drought “Watch” (Centre). Groundwater levels in the southcentral and southeast have been fluctuating as vegetation and evaporation begins to affect the ability of water to percolate into the ground, however during heavy rainfall events groundwater levels have begun to respond in a positive way.

Commonwealth Drought Task Force: The next Commonwealth Drought Task Force meeting has been postponed until 11 a.m. on May 16, 2017, at PEMA Headquarters at which time the members will review conditions and recommend any changes to the counties that remain in drought “Watch” status.

Drought Report Details

Precipitation – Over the last seven days, precipitation ranged from 0.1 to 1.1 inches in the east; 0.2 to 0.9 inches in the central part of the state; and 0.8 to 1.3 inches in the west. The 90-day precipitation trigger shows all counties in “Normal” drought status.

Surface Water – Instantaneous flows range from normal to high in the west, north central and northeastern part of the state; and normal to much below normal in the remaining parts of the state. The 30-day running average streamflow indicators show one county (Philadelphia) in drought “Watch” status with the remaining counties in “Normal” drought status.

Groundwater – The 30-day moving average indicators for groundwater levels are showing eight counties in drought “Watch” (Berks, Centre, Chester, Delaware, Lancaster, Lehigh, Northampton and Philadelphia); no counties in “Warning” and two counties in “Emergency” (Cumberland and Franklin). Centre County’s drought trigger status moved from “Warning” to “Watch”.

Palmer Drought Severity Index – The Palmer soil moisture indicator is showing all counties in “Normal” drought trigger status for this reporting period.

Public Water Supply Agencies (PWSAs) – Public water suppliers are requested to continue to follow the county-wide declarations unless there is a need for more stringent restrictions, at which point water suppliers may initiate their own voluntary or mandatory water use restrictions. The following public water suppliers continue to implement voluntary restrictions:

- Bloomfield Borough Water Authority, Perry County
- Mahanoy Township Authority, Schuylkill County
- Mary D Community Association, Schuylkill County
- Richfield Area Joint Authority, Juniata County
- Schuylkill County Municipal Authority, Schuylkill County
- Schuylkill Haven Borough, Schuylkill County

Forecast – The 7-day forecast indicates precipitation will range from 1.5 to 2.5 inches in the east; 1.25 to 1.75 inches in the central part of the state; and 1.25 to 2.0 inches in the west. The far eastern part of the state is to be forecasted to receive the most significant rainfall.

Current Drought Status

