



News for Immediate Release

Aug. 5, 2011

DEP Declares Drought Watches, Warnings Around Commonwealth

Below-Normal Rainfall Leads to Water Deficits

Harrisburg — The Department of Environmental Protection today issued a drought warning for four Pennsylvania counties and a drought watch for 40 counties.

"With the hot, dry summer, our statewide monitoring network indicates a need to take this first step, which is aimed at alerting the public and water suppliers that it makes sense to take some voluntary common sense steps to conserve," DEP Secretary Mike Krancer said. "We recommended this to Pennsylvania's Drought Task Force, and the members agreed."

A drought watch declaration is the first and least severe level of the state's three drought classifications. It calls for a voluntary five-percent reduction in non-essential water use and puts large water consumers on notice to begin planning for the possibility of reduced water supplies. A drought warning asks residents to voluntarily reduce water use by 10 to 15 percent.

Precipitation deficits over the past 90 days are as great as 4.1 inches below normal in Elk County and 4.4 inches below normal in Chester County. DEP is sending letters to all water suppliers in the affected areas, notifying them of the need to monitor their supplies and update their drought contingency plans as necessary.

The agency monitors a network of groundwater wells and stream gauges across the state that provides comprehensive data to the Commonwealth Drought Coordinator. In addition to precipitation, groundwater and stream flow levels, DEP monitors soil moisture and water supply storage and shares this data with other state and federal agencies.

Individuals can take a number of measures around the home to conserve water, including:

- Install low-flow plumbing fixtures and aerators on faucets.
- Check for household leaks. A leaking toilet can waste up to 200 gallons of water each day.
- Take short showers instead of baths.
- Replace older appliances with high-efficiency, front-loading models that use about 30 percent less water and 40 to 50 percent less energy.

- Run dishwashers and washing machines only with full loads.
- Keep water in the refrigerator to avoid running water from a faucet until it is cold.

On its website, DEP also offers water conservation recommendations and water audit procedures for commercial and industrial users, such as food processors, hotels and educational institutions. Water conservation tips and drought information can be found online at www.depweb.state.pa.us, keyword: drought.

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Editor's note: The four counties under a Drought Warning are Cameron, Elk, McKean and Potter. The 40 counties under a Drought Watch are Allegheny, Armstrong, Beaver, Bedford, Berks, Blair, Bradford, Bucks, Butler, Cambria, Centre, Chester, Clarion, Clearfield, Clinton, Crawford, Dauphin, Delaware, Erie, Forest, Fulton, Huntingdon, Indiana, Jefferson, Juniata, Lancaster, Lawrence, Lebanon, Lycoming, Mercer, Mifflin, Montgomery, Perry, Philadelphia, Schuylkill, Sullivan, Tioga, Venango, Warren and Wyoming.

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