

October 17, 2007

Last week, the eastern portion of the state received between 1.5 to 3.5 inches of rain improving conditions in those counties while the remainder of the state received very little to no rain. Precipitation over the past 30 days is below normal except for the very northeastern corner of state, which is at normal to slightly above normal. The northeast and southwest sections of the state are about normal for the 90-day departures and the remainder of the state is below normal.

Stream flow indicators are showing below normal conditions across the state. The county gages in the southeast and northeast corner of the state have improved based on last Thursdays rainfall, however it is too soon to say if that improvement will be sustained for any period of time as the gages in those areas have returned to below normal flows. The northern portion of the Susquehanna River Basin is reflecting the worst conditions for streamflow based on the 30-day county average plots. The Pennsylvania Daily Streamflow Map indicates that daily flows continue to remain below normal with two gages in Clinton County at record lows based on instantaneous flow readings. The Middle and Upper Susquehanna River Basin currently have the lowest flows based on a review of current reported streamflows.

Groundwater levels continue to show stress with indicators moving from “normal” to “watch” in two counties (Adams and York), moving from “watch” to “warning” in two counties (Sullivan and Wyoming) and moving from “watch” to “emergency” in two counties (McKean and Potter).

Forecasts for the next 7-days indicate the possibility of a maximum of 1.0 to 2.0 inches, with the central portion of the state to receive the highest amount. The 7-14-day forecast indicates that 0.25 to 1.0 inches of rain may occur across most of the Commonwealth. While these levels of precipitation would be welcome, they will provide little, if any, recovery for stream flow or groundwater levels.

Although the eastern portion of the state received rain last week, groundwater levels continue to decline in several areas of the state and stream flows are dropping as the precipitation deficits accumulate. Typically, groundwater recharge will begin in the fall, but this has been delayed this year. Based on the 30-day average County Gages and daily streamflow values, there is increasing support to move additional counties into a drought “warning” status, particularly in the central northern tier of the state. Conditions will continue to be monitored closely.

A Drought Task Force meeting will be held on 10/22 to discuss current conditions. The Commonwealth remains in a drought watch status for 53 counties and a drought warning status for Clinton County.