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**Harrisburg, PA 17105-8555**

November 6, 2001

**Bureau of Watershed Management  
Office of Commonwealth Drought Coordinator**

717-772-4048

***- - - DROUGHT WATCH and WARNING DECLARED - - -***

Dear Public Water Supplier:

We are writing to inform you about the drought watch and warning declarations, which Secretary Hess announced on Tuesday, November 6 on behalf of Governor Mark Schweiker. These declarations expand the drought watches announced on August 8 and 23 by adding the following 10 counties: Bucks; Carbon; Delaware; Lehigh; Monroe; Montgomery; Northampton; Philadelphia; Pike; and Wayne. The following nine counties, previously in watch, are now upgraded to a warning: Adams; Chester, Cumberland; Dauphin; Franklin; Lancaster; Lebanon; Perry; and York.

The expansion of the watch area, comprising counties in the Delaware River Basin, is in response to continuing precipitation deficits and declining stream flows and ground water levels in combination with the recent descent of the New York City Delaware Basin reservoir system into the drought warning zone. Delaware Basin drought operations are guided by local and regional conditions in the basin as well as by storage in the reservoir system.

The warning declaration, affecting counties primarily in the lower Susquehanna and the Potomac River basins, comes in response to escalating precipitation deficits, rapidly declining ground water levels and near record-low stream flows.

While September brought moderate drought relief to much of the Commonwealth, October delivered below-normal precipitation in all but the northwestern part of the state, with October deficits in the south-central and southeast counties approaching three inches and 365-day deficits hovering in the 9 to 12-inch range. Record low ground water levels have been recorded in Lebanon County for several months and stream flows in Cumberland County have been near record-low levels.

Please review your drought contingency plan and update your plan if necessary to account for any changes in either your sources or the demands on your system. If you do not have a drought contingency plan, you should be preparing one. If you are preparing one for the first time, we have information available to help you, and we can provide technical assistance. Call our Division of Water Use Planning at the number above if you need assistance. After you have completed your plan, you should submit it to us for review and approval.

We encourage you to use the Drought Information Center on our web site at <http://www.dep.state.pa.us> (choose Drought Information Center). We post drought updates on that site on a regular basis to keep you informed of emerging conditions. That site also either provides or links to information that is useful for monitoring conditions in your area or for educating your customers in various methods of conserving water. If you have a web site, you may wish to consider linking directly to our site, so your customers will have ready access to our information as well.

Remember, in a drought watch, we should all be seeking to reduce water use by about 5 percent through voluntary conservation measures. During a warning, our goal is 10-15 percent reductions, still through voluntary measures. Under a gubernatorial emergency proclamation, bans on nonessential water uses become mandatory, and water rationing may also be employed if necessary, with the approval of the Commonwealth Drought Coordinator, as agent of the Pennsylvania Emergency Management Council. Prudent use of our resources now can help to prevent, or at least delay, the need for emergency measures later.

If you have any questions, or we can be of assistance to you in any way, please feel free to contact our Division of Water Use Planning at the telephone number listed above.

Sincerely,

Stuart I. Gansell  
Director  
Bureau of Watershed Management and  
Commonwealth Drought Coordinator