



For Release: IMMEDIATE

Contact: Jennifer Meicht

Thursday, December 6, 2001

(518) 402-8000

DEC ISSUES DROUGHT WARNING FOR SOUTHEASTERN NEW YORK COUNTIES

31 Counties Now Under Drought Advisories, Water Conservation Urged

New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) Commissioner Erin M. Crotty today issued a drought warning for 11 counties in southeastern New York, including Delaware, Dutchess, Greene, Orange, Otsego, Putnam, Rockland, Schoharie, Sullivan, Ulster, and Westchester.

In addition, Commissioner Crotty has declared a drought watch for 10 additional New York counties in the Mohawk-Upper Hudson Valley region, including Albany, Columbia, Fulton, Herkimer, Montgomery, Oneida, Rensselaer, Saratoga, Schenectady and Washington.

The newest drought watch expands upon two earlier watches issued on August 24, 2001 and November 5, 2001 for 10 counties in the southern tier and central New York, including Allegany, Broome, Cattaraugus, Chautauqua, Chemung, Chenango, Cortland, Madison, Steuben and Tioga. The 31 counties under drought declaration are located in the Chemung, Delaware, Genesee, Hudson, Mohawk, Ramapo and Susquehanna River Basins.

“Continued dry weather conditions in many parts of the State have prompted the need for more aggressive water conservation efforts on the part of local governments and county residents, particularly those dependent on private groundwater wells,” Commissioner Crotty said. “During this critical time, residents in the affected counties are encouraged to conserve water whenever possible until conditions improve.”

A drought watch and drought warning are the first two of four levels of state drought advisories (watch, warning, emergency and disaster). During a drought watch, no mandatory restrictions are in place. Local public water suppliers are urged to promote voluntary conservation and to review and update their drought contingency plans. Residents are encouraged to voluntarily limit their water use and fix leaking pipes and faucets. During a drought warning, local public water suppliers are urged to intensify voluntary conservation, intensify leakage control efforts, and make provisions for utilization of emergency supplies.

Although most water supply conditions are considered near normal throughout most of the state, some water supply reservoirs have dropped to record low levels. Stream flows and ground water levels are significantly below normal in most of the state. Below normal precipitation during the past six months, including well-below normal rainfall for the last two months has compounded the problem. The National Weather Service outlook for December indicates near normal temperatures and precipitation. Reservoir storage and ground water levels are not expected to improve in the immediate future.

DEC monitors water resources throughout the state on a regular basis. Drought declarations are triggered by the State Drought Index, which reflects precipitation, reservoir/lake levels, stream flow, and ground water levels in the nine drought regions of the state. Each of these indicators is assigned a weighted value based on its significance to various uses in a region. The cumulative value of these indicators determines whether a drought advisory is warranted.

For additional information, people can visit DEC’s “Drought” web page at:
www.dec.state.ny.us/website/dow/droughtfacts.html