

August 01, 2011 Drought Report

Precipitation

Precipitation departures are increasing for all of the past 30-, 60-, and 90- day periods. The 10 counties with the highest departure (between 26% and 50% below average) include:

Adams

Berks

Blair

Cambria

Cameron

Chester

Clearfield

Elk

Montgomery

Philadelphia

County Precipitation Indicators (based on the 90-day departure) Status:

Watch – Adams, Berks, Blair, Cambria, Chester (moved from Warning), Clearfield, Jefferson, Montgomery (moved from Warning), and Philadelphia.

Warning – Cameron and Elk

Surface Water

A review of the county monitoring gages indicates that the 30-day average streamflow values continue to decrease due to the lack of rainfall and higher than normal temperatures during the past week with the western and central counties displaying continued decrease in flows into Watch status.

County Streamflow Status:

Watch - Armstrong, Beaver, Bradford, Centre, Chester, Clarion, Clearfield, Crawford, Dauphin, Fulton, Huntingdon, Jefferson, Juniata, Lawrence, Lebanon, Lycoming, Potter, Tioga, and Venango.

Warning - Clinton, Elk, Forest, Indiana, and McKean.

Emergency – Bedford, Cameron, and Mercer.

The snapshot of instantaneous streamflows varies across the state with flows ranging from normal to much below normal across most of the Commonwealth with the exception being the northeast where flows range from normal to above normal.

Groundwater

Groundwater levels statewide are decreasing, as would be expected during this time of year with current low precipitation and little recharge due to evapo-transpiration. The monitoring well for Potter County has now dipped into the “emergency” indicator for the 30-day moving average with Schuylkill County moving from normal to “watch”. The rate of decline in well level appears to place the Juniata County well in line for “emergency” levels in coming weeks.

Forecast

The 7-day forecast calls for between 4 to 5 inches of cumulative precipitation in the northwest and northeast corners of the state with between 0.5 and 2 inches inches for the remainder of the state.

Public Water Supply Agencies (PWSAs)

There are currently 6 PWSAs that have initiated either voluntary or mandatory restrictions as a result of the dry conditions and in order to begin conserving their supply.

Summary

Counties located predominantly across the Appalachian Plateaus (western and central portions of the state) and in the southeast continue to display drought indicators in watch/warning/emergency due to the lack of precipitation over the past two months. Areas in the northeastern portion of the state and the southwest where precipitation has been closer to normal remain in mostly normal conditions.

A Drought Task Force meeting has been scheduled for August 4 to discuss the current conditions. If meaningful precipitation isn't received, a recommendation will be made to declare a drought watch and/or warning for affected areas of the state.