



News for Immediate Release

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DEP Issues Drought Warning for 24 Counties; Drought Watch for Remainder of State

Below-Normal Rainfall Leads to Water Deficits

Harrisburg – The Department of Environmental Protection today issued a drought warning for 24 Pennsylvania counties and a drought watch for the remaining 43 counties as precipitation deficits continued to worsen statewide, according to Environmental Protection Secretary John Hanger.

“The hot, dry summer led to steadily-declining ground and surface water levels, particularly in the southwest and east-central portions of the state,” Hanger said. “Pennsylvania’s Drought Task Force has concurred with DEP’s recommendation that drought watches and warnings be issued for all 67 counties to alert water suppliers, industry and the public of the need to conserve water.”

A drought watch declaration is the first level — and least severe — of the state’s three drought classifications. It calls for a voluntary 5-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 reduce water use voluntarily by 10-15 percent.

The 24 counties under a drought warning are: Allegheny, Beaver, Bedford, Berks, Bucks, Carbon, Fayette, Franklin, Fulton, Greene, Huntingdon, Lackawanna, Lawrence, Lehigh, Luzerne, Mercer, Monroe, Montgomery, Northampton, Philadelphia, Pike, Schuylkill, Somerset and Washington.

The 43 counties under a drought watch are: Adams, Armstrong, Blair, Bradford, Butler, Cambria, Cameron, Centre, Chester, Clarion, Clearfield, Clinton, Columbia, Crawford, Cumberland, Dauphin, Delaware, Elk, Erie, Forest, Indiana, Jefferson, Juniata, Lancaster, Lebanon, Lycoming, McKean, Mifflin, Montour, Northumberland, Perry, Potter, Snyder, Sullivan, Susquehanna, Tioga, Union, Venango, Warren, Wayne, Westmoreland, Wyoming and York.

Precipitation deficits over the past 90-day period are currently as great as 5.6 inches below normal in Somerset County and 5.5 inches in Bucks County.

DEP is sending letters to all water suppliers statewide, notifying them of the need to monitor their supplies and update their drought contingency plans as necessary.

DEP monitors a statewide network of groundwater wells and stream gauges that provide comprehensive data to the state drought coordinator. In addition to precipitation, groundwater and streamflow levels, DEP monitors soil moisture and water supply storage, and shares this data with other state and federal agencies.

DEP offers the following tips for conserving water around the home:

In the bathroom:

- Install low-flow plumbing fixtures and aerators on faucets;
- Check for household leaks – a leaking toilet can waste up to 200 gallons of water a day;
- Take short showers instead of baths.

Kitchen/laundry areas:

- Replace older appliances with high efficiency, front-loading models that use about 30 percent less water and 40-50 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.

The department also offers water conservation recommendations for commercial and industrial users, such as food processors, hotels and motels, schools and colleges, as well as water audit procedures for large water customers.

Water conservation tips and drought information can be found online at www.depweb.state.pa.us, keyword: drought.

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