



Commonwealth of Massachusetts
Executive Office of Energy & Environmental Affairs



Department of Environmental Protection

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Charles D. Baker
Governor

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Lieutenant Governor

Matthew A. Beaton
Secretary

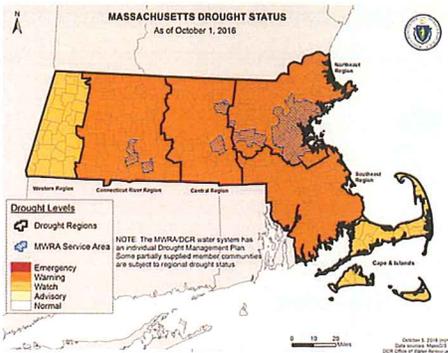
Martin Suuberg
Commissioner

October 11, 2016

To: All registered or permitted Public Water Suppliers and all other users permitted under the Water Management Act
Re: A Final Drought Status Update for the 2016 Outdoor Water Use Season

On October 5, 2016, with all of Massachusetts now experiencing drought conditions, groundwater, stream flow and reservoir levels throughout the Commonwealth continuing to decline, Energy and Environmental Affairs Secretary Matthew Beaton issued an updated Drought Declaration. Current conditions are:

- the Southeastern, Central and Northeastern Massachusetts remain at Drought Warning;
- the Connecticut River Valley is now at Drought Warning, up from Drought Watch in September;
- Cape Cod and the Islands remain at Drought Watch; and
- Western Massachusetts is now at Drought Watch, up from Drought Advisory in September.



The latest drought status update is published on the Web at:

<http://www.mass.gov/eea/agencies/dcr/water-res-protection/water-data-tracking/drought-status.html>.

To confirm which drought region your town or city is in, go to the above website and in the “Drought Maps” section click on the link to “List of Massachusetts Towns by Drought Region.”

The revised declaration resulted from the recommendation issued from the October 5th meeting of the Massachusetts Drought Management Task Force, comprised of state, federal and local officials. The revised declaration will be reviewed in November, and will remain in effect until water levels return to normal in the affected regions. The map above summarizes Massachusetts’ drought status as of this month.

Drought Declaration and Water Management Act Permits

The response by public water suppliers to the drought and the need to conserve water has been exemplary. Over 180 water suppliers have put outdoor water use restrictions into place this season, tailoring restrictions to their community’s needs and frequently exceeding the requirements of their Water Management Act permits.

Although Water Management permit restrictions on outdoor water use end on September 30th, and outdoor water use is falling in most towns as autumn begins, MassDEP strongly encourages suppliers to keep outdoor restrictions in place for the duration of this fall. The prolonged drought has had lasting agricultural, environmental, economic, and public safety impacts, and water supply sources will need time to recover as

water use falls and rainfall (hopefully) returns to more normal fall patterns. Water conservation by the public, including those with private wells, will help address the low groundwater and reservoir levels across the state.

Going Forward

In response to this year's increasingly dry conditions, **MassDEP has enclosed guidance on actions for water suppliers to consider, and guidance on appropriate outdoor water use restrictions at each drought level.** The guidance reflects the need to limit outdoor water use to ensure essential needs such as drinking water, fire protection and crop irrigation are being met. It is generally more restrictive than the outdoor water use requirements in Water Management permits.

In addition, MassDEP is reviewing our Model Outdoor Water Use By-Law/Ordinance to ensure it provides a template that adequately encompasses all outdoor water use within a community and provides measures that can help communities respond to extreme conditions like those we have experienced this past summer.

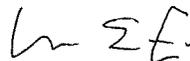
Declaration of Water Supply Emergency

MassDEP will continue to provide technical assistance to communities on managing systems and the use of emergency connections and water supplies.

Any PWS having difficulty meeting demands, drought related or not, may request a Declaration of Water Supply Emergency ("Emergency Declaration") from the Department. The provisions of the Emergency Declaration process are outlined in regulations at 310 CMR 36.40. Suppliers should contact your DEP Regional Drinking Water Program Chief (see contact information below), or Duane LeVangie of the WMA Program at (617) 292-5706, to discuss concerns or begin the Emergency Declaration process.

The Emergency Declaration will require the PWS to submit a plan for Departmental review and approval that includes provisions to remedy the emergency. Such a plan could include measures to purchase water from another supplier, use emergency sources, implement aggressive conservation measures, and provide a mechanism to restrict outside water use for those PWSs that do not currently have the ability to implement such measures.

Very truly yours,



Douglas E. Fine
Assistant Commissioner
Bureau of Water Resources

Cc: Duane LeVangie, WMA Program Chief, DEP Boston (617-292-5706)
Thomas Mahin, Drinking Water Chief, DEP NERO (978-694-3226)
Robert Bostwick, Drinking Water Chief, DEP CERO (508-849-4036)
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Rebecca Weidman, Director, BRP-DWM, DEP Boston
Jen Pedersen, MWWA
Julia Blatt, Mass River Alliance

Final Drought Status Update for the 2016 Outdoor Water Use Season MassDEP Guidance on Water Conservation and Emergency Planning

Flushing Programs

Suppliers may consider delaying routine pipe flushing until later in the fall, if such a delay will not adversely affect water quality. Suppliers with mandatory flushing schedules should contact your DEP Regional Drinking Water Program Chief to discuss concerns or to delay routinely scheduled pipe flushing.

Emergency Response Plans

With drought conditions persisting throughout the Commonwealth, now is a good time to review your emergency response plan and assess your preparedness to deal with drought conditions (and other extreme weather conditions). For more information on emergency response planning, visit <http://www.mass.gov/eea/agencies/massdep/water/drinking/water-systems-ops.html>.

Guidance for Outdoor Water Use Restrictions at Specific Drought Levels

Water Management permittees should review any outdoor water use requirements in their permit. In addition to permit requirements, Towns may have particular circumstances that make limiting water use more urgent to ensure water in an emergency.

Nothing in a Water Management Permit or Registration prevents a water supplier from implementing water use restrictions that are more stringent than those set forth in their permit, registration or in this guidance.

Regions in Drought Warning: Severe drought conditions

- Outdoor water use should be banned.

Regions in Drought Watch: Moderate drought conditions

- Outdoor watering should be limited to “handheld” with a hose or a watering can after 5 p.m. or before 9 a.m. (to avoid evaporative losses).
- Outdoor watering with irrigation systems and sprinklers should be banned.
- Watering of municipal parks and recreation fields with irrigation systems and sprinklers may continue, at the water supplier’s discretion, before 9 a.m. and after 5 p.m.
- Filling swimming pools, washing cars and washing buildings should be banned.

Regions in Drought Advisory: Conditions are abnormally dry

- Outdoor watering with irrigation systems and sprinklers should be limited to no more than one day per week before 9 a.m. and after 5 p.m.
- Watering with a handheld hose should be limited to after 5 p.m. or before 9 a.m. (to avoid evaporative losses).

Households and businesses that draw water from private wells should conserve water by reducing indoor and outdoor water usage, and by abiding by the water use restrictions in place in their community.

Water Management permits exempt certain water uses from mandatory restrictions, including:

- For health or safety reasons;
- For the production of food and fiber;
- For the maintenance of livestock; and
- To meet the core functions of a business (for example, irrigation by plant nurseries as necessary to maintain stock).