The State of New Hampshire
DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES

Thomas S. Burack, Commissioner

Drought Emergency in New Hampshire
Recommended Measures for New Hampshire Residents

Southern New Hampshire is experiencing a drought emergency. Southern New Hampshire has received about 50% of its normal rainfall over the last six months. Streamflows and groundwater levels are at historic low levels. Some New Hampshire residents on private wells, as well as some community water systems are experiencing water supply shortages. More widespread shortages are imminent if rainfall does not replenish our lakes, streams and groundwater supplies before winter weather sets in. Even with rainstorms, it is unlikely our water sources will substantially refill until after the snowmelt during the spring of 2017. The drought condition is a very slow-moving natural disaster that may continue to worsen and the public's assistance in conserving water is key to sustaining existing water supplies.

To stay informed on the latest drought conditions and current drought related information go to the NHDES Drought Management Program webpage (see below).

Reduce Water Use Immediately

Average water use per capita in New Hampshire is approximately 63 gallons per day for indoor use. In the summer, total water use increases to 93 gallons per capita per day due to outdoor water use, mostly attributed to lawn watering. Take the below actions to protect water supplies and to save your family water, energy, and money.

Lawn Watering – Discontinue lawn watering immediately. Lawn watering can double household water use and is straining water supplies.

Sink Faucets – Whether you are brushing your teeth, washing your hands, or washing dishes, turn off the faucet to save 2.5 gallons per minute (gpm). For further savings, replace sink aerators with a 1.0 gpm to 1.5 gpm aerator.

Showerheads - Reduce shower time to save anywhere from 2.5 gpm to 5 gpm. Look closely at your showerhead for the labeled flow rate (gpm) and consider replacing it with a WaterSense certified showerhead that guarantees performance at 2.0 gpm or less.

Clothes Washers – Wash only full loads and replace clothes washers that are more than 10 years old with new Energy Star certified washers to reduce water use from 23 gallons per load to 13 gallons per load and to cut energy use by 25%. For more information, go to https://www.energystar.gov/. NHsaves.com offers a $30 rebate for energy efficient washing machines. Rebate forms are also often available with the retailer.

Toilets – Fix running toilets to eliminate hundreds of gallons a day of wasted water. To test your toilet for a leak, place 15 drops of food coloring in the water tank of the toilet and wait 15 minutes to see if the color appears in the toilet bowl. If the color leaks into the bowl, a common cause is the toilet flapper, which can be replaced with little effort or cost.

Toilets older than 1994 may use anywhere from 3.5 gallons per flush (gpf) to 7 gpf. Replace older toilets with WaterSense certified toilets (1.28 gpf) to save hundreds of gallons a week.

*WaterSense certified showerheads, toilets, and sink aerators have been tested for performance and are guaranteed to use 20% less water than today's standard products. Look for the WaterSense label on the packaging at your local home improvement retailer or in the product information online. For more information about the products, go to https://www3.epa.gov/watersense/ and click on "Products".

Additional Recommendations for Households on Private Wells

All wells are susceptible to the impacts of drought and households with private wells that fail may incur substantial expenses to improve or replace their well. Be prepared.

Manage Your Water Use - Spread out the timing of water use so that multiple water uses do not co-occur and so the well has time to replenish.

Address Water Supply Problems Before Winter - If your water supply is currently becoming dewatered, now is the time to address the deficiencies. Deferring work to winter months is risky because completing the work may not be possible and/or could be more costly in the winter months.

Financial Preparedness - Households should identify savings or other financing options for addressing failed water supply wells.

Well Location and Basic Information – Maintain records showing the exact location of the well and/or maintain a well location marker that can be identified during all seasons. Maintain records regarding your well construction and pump work.

Be Safe – Call your local municipality to find out if an emergency source of water has been designated for private well owners affected by drought. If sharing water with a neighbor, do not drink or cook with water out of a hose. Never interconnect plumping with a neighbor, as you risk spreading contaminated water.

Detailed drought guidance for households on private wells including financial assistance programs for very low income households in rural areas , well improvement options, and how to find a certified water well contractor can be found at http://des.nh.gov/organization/divisions/water/dam/drought/documents/droughtguidehome.pdf.

For Additional Information

Please contact the Drinking Water and Groundwater Bureau at (603) 271-2513 or dwgbinfo@des.nh.gov, or visit the NHDES Drought Management Program webpage by going to www.des.nh.gov, clicking on the "A to Z" list and scrolling down to "Drought Management."