



The State of New Hampshire
DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES



Thomas S. Burack, Commissioner

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Drought Guidance for Municipalities

Persistent drought conditions in New Hampshire often lead to private well failures and public water system supply issues. Municipalities have an important role to play in mitigating drought impacts. Actions a municipality may take include the below:

- Implement outdoor water use restrictions.
- Establish an emergency location where residents may access water.
- Communicate with the public on drought conditions, importance of conserving water, and water conservation tips.
- Provide residents on private wells with information on how to address drought impacts and who to report impacts to.
- Provide DES with information on water restrictions and emergency access locations for posting on the Drought Management Program webpage.

Below is guidance on completing the above, including a link to a model regulations for restricting lawn watering, emergency access well testing information, outreach materials for the public and private well owners, a list of state contacts, and a press release template.

Drought Conditions

To stay informed on the latest drought conditions and current drought related information go to the NHDES Drought Management Program webpage at:

<http://des.nh.gov/organization/divisions/water/dam/drought/index.htm>. To determine the severity of drought in your municipality, under “Technical Assistance” click on “Drought Conditions” and then on “US Drought Monitor”.

Authority to Restrict Lawn Watering and Other Water Use

Average indoor water use per capita in New Hampshire is approximately 63 gallons per day. In the summer, total water use increases to 93 gallons per capita per day due to outdoor water use, which is mostly attributed to lawn watering. During a drought, pursuant to RSA 41.11-d, municipalities and village districts have authority to adopt regulations to restrict outdoor lawn watering for households that obtain water from either a private well or public water system. Municipalities owning public water systems also have authority to impose restrictions on customers that go beyond lawn watering.

Model regulations including additional information on restriction options and authority to impose restrictions may be found at:

https://www.des.nh.gov/organization/divisions/water/dwgb/water_conservation/categories/publications.htm

DES Web Site: www.des.nh.gov

To add your water system or municipality to the water ban and restriction list posted on the Drought Management Program webpage, e-mail Stacey Herbold, NHDES Water Conservation Program, at stacey.herbold@des.nh.gov with the following information:

PWSID (if applicable):

Name of water system (if applicable):

Town:

Is the ban voluntary or mandatory?:

Details of the restriction/ban:

Providing Emergency Water Supplies to the Public

Municipalities may provide access to an emergency water supply for use by residents that rely on private wells impacted by drought. Where possible, municipalities should designate a local source of water that is already associated with a state regulated public water system to ensure the water has been tested and is safe. If a source of drinking water is made available to the public that is not associated with a public water system, please contact Brandon Kernen at (603) 271-0660 or via email at brandon.kernen@des.nh.gov to request well testing assistance.

Fire departments may deliver drinking water to area farms to provide water for livestock or to irrigate crops. These efforts are critical to area farmers who are struggling to grow food for their livestock and provide them drinking water. Fire departments should not use their tanks to deliver water to households by refilling wells, nor should water from fire department tanks be used for human drinking and cooking. This activity could result in contamination of groundwater and cause people consuming the water to become sick.

Please provide the location of emergency supplies to Stacey Herbold, NHDES Water Conservation Program, at stacey.herbold@des.nh.gov. A list will be maintained on the NHDES Drought Management Program page.

Message to Provide to the Public

“Drought Guidance for the Public”:

<http://des.nh.gov/organization/divisions/water/dam/drought/documents/publicemergency.pdf>

“Drought Guidance for Homeowners with Private Wells”:

<http://des.nh.gov/organization/divisions/water/dam/drought/documents/droughtguidehome.pdf>

Please direct the public on private wells who have experienced well supply issues to the below surveys:

“Drought Economic Impact Survey for Households on Private Wells”

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/drought2>

“Drought Economic Impact Survey for Industrial, Commercial, Institutional, Public Water System and Agricultural Water Users”

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/drought1>

Municipal Water System Guidance

“Drought Guidance for Public Water Systems”

<https://www.des.nh.gov/organization/divisions/water/dam/drought/documents/pubwatersys.pdf>

NHDES Contacts:

Drought Management Team/Emergency Access Well Testing:
Brandon Kernen brandon.kernen@des.nh.gov (603) 271-0660

Fire Danger (NHDRED): Brian Thibeault (603) 223-4289

Homeowner Private Wells: Rick Schofield richard.schofield@des.nh.gov (603) 271-1974

*If a well has failed, homeowners should also contact the local health officer.

Large Public Water System Water Shortages: Rick Skarinka richard.skarinka@des.nh.gov (603) 271-2948

Lake Levels: Jim Gallagher james.gallagher@des.nh.gov (603) 271-1961

Press Inquiries: Jim Martin james.martin@des.nh.gov (603) 271-3710

Small Public Water Systems Water Shortages: Shelley Frost shelley.frost@des.nh.gov (603) 271-2949

Stream Flows: Ted Diers ted.diers@des.nh.gov (603) 271-3289

Surface Water Withdrawals: Greg Comstock (603) 271-2983 Gregg.Comstock@des.nh.gov (Also see “Water Withdrawals from Surface Waters” fact sheet:

<http://www.des.nh.gov/organization/commissioner/pip/factsheets/dwgb/documents/dwgb-1-17.pdf>)

Water Restrictions, Emergency Water Access Locations, Lawn Watering and Water Restriction Ordinances, Water Efficiency: Stacey Herbold stacey.herbold@des.nh.gov (603) 271-6685

Model Press Release

MUNICIPALITY NAME Implements Outdoor Water Ban and asks Residents to Conserve amid Persistent Drought Conditions

MUNICIPALITY NAME has adopted a lawn watering restriction ordinance and is requiring all residents, including those on private wells to stop watering lawns and is requesting the entire community take steps to conserve water. This drought is historic, southern New Hampshire has not experienced such a drought in nearly 50 years. Above average rain and the wise use of existing water supplies is key to mitigating drought conditions. MUNICIPALITY NAME needs the cooperation of customers to help protect water supplies while drought conditions persist.

Outdoor water use, primarily for lawn watering, is one of the largest consumptive uses in the summer months. Lawn watering is straining water supplies and needs to be curtailed. There are also many opportunities indoors to use water more efficiently with little effort that will save not only water, but energy, and money. Indoor use can be cut by 20% or more by turning off faucets while washing dishes and hands, only washing full loads of laundry, and taking shorter showers, as well as by replacing old showerheads, toilets, sink aerators, and washing machines with EPA WaterSense and Energy Star® certified products. Also, repairing running toilets can save hundreds of gallons a day. For current drought information and water efficiency fact sheets including efficiency tips, go to www.des.nh.gov, click on the "A-Z" list, and scroll down to the Drought Management Program.