



## Drought Guidance for Municipalities

Persistent drought conditions in New Hampshire often lead to residential well failures and put stress on public water system supplies. 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 relying on residential wells with information on how to address drought impacts and the contact for reporting impacts.
- Provide NHDES with information on water restrictions and emergency access locations for posting on the Drought Management Program webpage.

Below is further guidance related to the above actions, including a link to a model regulation for restricting lawn watering, emergency access well testing information, outreach materials for the public and residential 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](#).

### Water Use Information

Residential water use is the largest consumptive water use in New Hampshire outside of energy production. 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 can mostly be attributed to lawn watering. Some communities have a higher proportion of in-ground irrigation systems and experience doubling of water use in the summer. Restricting lawn watering and other outdoor uses can result in a significant reduction in stress on water supplies.

### Authority to Restrict Lawn Watering and Other Water Restrictions

Pursuant to [RSA 41:11-d](#), municipalities and village districts have authority during a drought to adopt regulations to restrict water users, including residents and businesses, relying on their own wells or a public water system from watering lawns within municipal boundaries. The purpose of this type of restriction is to ensure the community's critical needs are met and to prevent residential wells from experiencing water shortages at the expense of another's non-essential use. Also, municipalities owning public water systems, as well as other owners of community water systems have authority to impose restrictions on customers that go beyond lawn watering. This type of restriction may not only be helpful

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to protect a utility's supply, but also may be helpful to protect residential well supplies; therefore, coordinating with other local community water systems on implementing restrictions may be beneficial.

To look up contact information for the community water systems in your municipality, go to [OneStop](#), check the box "Public Water System," enter the municipality in the "Town" field, scroll down to "System Type" and check "Community Water Systems."

### **Outdoor Water Use Model Regulation**

When relying on model regulations, recognize that input from water suppliers in the state and a study on water restrictions show that significant reductions in water use only occur when mandatory restrictions are implemented. Hundreds of residential wells went dry during the 2016 drought, and homeowners who retained well contractors to improve their wells experienced a significant wait as a result of increased demand for services. Implementing a mandatory restriction early on during the drought is recommended.

#### [Model Regulation: Municipal and Village District Lawn Irrigation](#)

Municipal water suppliers have broader authority to restrict the type of outdoor water uses that may be restricted. [Model Regulation: Public Water System Outdoor Water Use Restriction](#)

### **Reporting Restrictions to NHDES for Publicizing**

During drought, NHDES will maintain a list of water systems and municipalities implementing outdoor water use restrictions on the [NHDES Drought Management Program webpage](#). To add your municipality to the list, please fill out the Water Restriction form on the NHDES Drought Management Program webpage. The public and the media are driven to this webpage during drought; therefore, this is an effective tool for spreading the message about water restrictions. If you have questions, email Stacey Herbold, NHDES Water Conservation Program, at [stacey.herbold@des.nh.gov](mailto:stacey.herbold@des.nh.gov).

### **Providing Emergency Water Supplies to the Public**

Municipalities may provide access to an emergency water supply for residents whose wells have been 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 by phone at (603) 271-0660 or via email at [brandon.kernen@des.nh.gov](mailto: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 and provide water to their livestock. Fire departments should not use their tanks to fill 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, via email at [stacey.herbold@des.nh.gov](mailto:stacey.herbold@des.nh.gov). A list will be maintained on the [NHDES Drought Management Program webpage](#).

### **Message to Provide to the Public**

The [NHDES Drought Management Program webpage](#) includes the status of current drought conditions and includes the below guidance documents:

- [Drought Guidance for the Public](#)
- [Drought Guidance for Homeowners on Residential Wells](#)
- [Drought Guidance for Public Water Systems](#)

During a drought, municipalities and NHDES often receive calls from concerned citizen related to observing water users, such as water tanker trucks, withdrawing water from surface waters. To help address these questions, see the fact sheet, [WD-DWGB-1-17 Intermittent Water Withdrawals from Surface Waters](#). In summary, the activity is legal if certain conditions are followed.

### **Contacts:**

Emergency Access Well Testing: Brandon Kernen [brandon.kernen@des.nh.gov](mailto:brandon.kernen@des.nh.gov) (603) 271-0660

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

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

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

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

Residential Wells: Abby Fopiano [abigail.fopiano@des.nh.gov](mailto:abigail.fopiano@des.nh.gov) (603) 271-1974

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

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

Surface Water Withdrawals: Greg Comstock [gregg.comstock@des.nh.gov](mailto:gregg.comstock@des.nh.gov) (603) 271-2983

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

### **Model Press Release for Restriction Pursuant to RSA 41:11-d**

#### **MUNICIPALITY NAME Implements Outdoor Lawn Watering Ban and Asks Residents to Conserve Amid Persistent Drought Conditions**

Pursuant to RSA 41:11-d, MUNICIPALITY NAME has implemented a lawn watering restriction and is requiring all residents and businesses, including those on public water systems and private wells, to stop watering lawns. While drought conditions persist, your cooperation is needed to ensure the critical needs of the community are met, such as fire supply, and to prevent non-essential water use from

impacting the supplies of residents on private wells. Until further notice, please cease watering lawns and take actions to reduce other non-essential water uses, such as washing cars and power washing.

While curbing outdoor water use is the current focus, there are also many opportunities indoors to use water more efficiently. 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 the Drought Management webpage at [www.des.nh.gov](http://www.des.nh.gov).

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