Drought Guidance for Community Water Systems

Persistent drought conditions in New Hampshire have historically resulted in water supply problems for public water systems. Below is information related to mitigating drought conditions and managing impacts.

Drought Conditions

To stay informed on the latest drought conditions and current drought-related information, visit the NHDES Drought Management webpage.

Authority to Restrict Outdoor Water Use

Pursuant to Env-Dw 503, public water systems have authority to implement outdoor water use restrictions during water supply emergencies, including drought, as well as to shut off. The purpose of implementing a restriction is to ensure the community’s essential and critical needs continue to be met. Guidance may be found at Implementing Water Use Restrictions at Public Water Systems.

It should also be noted that pursuant to RSA 41:11-d, municipalities have the authority to impose lawn watering restrictions on private well owners during a drought. For more information, see Drought Guidance for Municipalities.

When relying on this model regulation, 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.

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 webpage. To add your municipality to the list, please fill out the Outdoor Water Use Restrictions Reporting Form. 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 waterconservation@des.nh.gov.

Communicating with Customers

Use social media, email, local television, road signs and newspapers to provide the public with updates on the drought and the importance of conserving water. Also, the NHDES Drought Management webpage is a great source of information, including Drought Guidance for the Public.
Emergency Actions

In the event of a drought, water conservation measures may not be enough, and a system may need to bulk in water supplies and/or seek approval of an emergency supply well. For further details on these requirements, see the NHDES Public Water System Emergency Planning webpage.

Also, all community water systems are required to have an emergency plan in place. Reviewing the system’s emergency plan will help to make sure everyone is on the same page in the event of an emergency.

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