



The State of New Hampshire
DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES



Thomas S. Burack, Commissioner

2016 Drought Guidance for Municipalities and Public Water Systems

On July 22, 2016, a meeting of the New Hampshire Drought Management Team (DMT) was initiated due to persistent drought conditions. The DMT is comprised of over thirty officials representing specific activities and interested that can be impacted by the drought and is tasked with assessing the severity of the drought and coordinating response activities. At the time of the meeting, all counties south of Grafton and Carroll were considered to be in severe drought and climate experts were predicting the drought conditions to continue into the fall. Drought regions and the updates to drought status may be found at:

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

In response, NHDES is requesting that outdoor water use be limited. While lack of precipitation is the root cause of a drought, the conditions are greatly exasperated by an increase in outdoor water use to keep lawns green and to stay cool. Please reach out to your customers and/or communities to promote limiting water use based on the recommendations below and local knowledge of water supplies.

Please note that municipalities have a quick and easy way to impose residential lawn watering restrictions for public supplies and private wells. This tool is effective in ensuring residential private well owners and residential public users both limit water use. Municipalities should work with the community and public water suppliers to determine if this tool is needed (See 3(a)(i)).

Below are recommendations and resources available to you:

- 1) Check the Drought Management Program webpage for updates on drought conditions and water utility restrictions reported to NHDES:
<http://des.nh.gov/organization/divisions/water/dam/drought/index.htm>. Also, stay up to date on local conditions through speaking with your local water utilities/systems, residents, and businesses, as well as paying attention to drought-related media.
- 2) Promote limiting water use to essential uses through available communication methods such as websites, social media, local cable channels, and newsletters. NHDES endorses the following recommendations: (Local conditions should be considered when promoting recommendations.)
 - a) In areas of severe drought:
 - i) No outdoor water use except for hand watering of vegetable gardens and newly planted vegetation between 7pm and 8am; or
 - b) In abnormally dry areas:

- i) Even and odd day watering based on street address and limiting watering to between 7pm and 8am. No hosing down, driveways, walkways, patios, decks, cars or outdoor structures.; or
- 3) Implement voluntary or mandatory restrictions.
- a) Municipalities:
 - i) Restrict watering of residential lawns. RSA 41:11-d, “Restricting the Watering of Lawns”, establishes a process that the local governing body can take to form regulations to restrict the use of water from private wells or public water systems for residential lawn watering. The local governing body must give notice at least three calendar days by publication in two public places and posting in two public places before the regulations are implemented. A model regulation may be found here:
http://des.nh.gov/organization/divisions/water/dwgb/water_conservation/documents/mo-lawn-watering-rstrctn.pdf.
 - b) Public Water Systems:
 - i) Implement mandatory restrictions on non-essential use if it is determined demand will exceed supply. (See Env-Dw 503.18-503.20 and Env-Dw 503.09):
<http://des.nh.gov/organization/commissioner/legal/rules/index.htm>
 - ii) Implement voluntary restrictions or implement mandatory restrictions through the adoption of ordinances and bylaws using the model regulation and restriction options found here:
http://des.nh.gov/organization/divisions/water/dwgb/water_conservation/documents/water_use_restrictions.pdf.

Additional NHDES Resources

Drought Management Program

<http://des.nh.gov/organization/divisions/water/dam/drought/index.htm>

Emergency Water for Public Water Systems

http://des.nh.gov/organization/divisions/water/dwgb/wseps/bulk_water.htm

2016 Drought Guidance for Homeowners on Private Wells

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

Water efficiency tips and information:

http://des.nh.gov/organization/divisions/water/dwgb/water_conservation/categories/education.htm.