



Commonwealth of Massachusetts  
Executive Office of Energy & Environmental Affairs

# Department of Environmental Protection

One Winter Street Boston, MA 02108 • 617-292-5500

SEP 15 2016 10:44

Charles D. Baker  
Governor

Matthew A. Beaton  
Secretary

Karyn E. Polito  
Lieutenant Governor

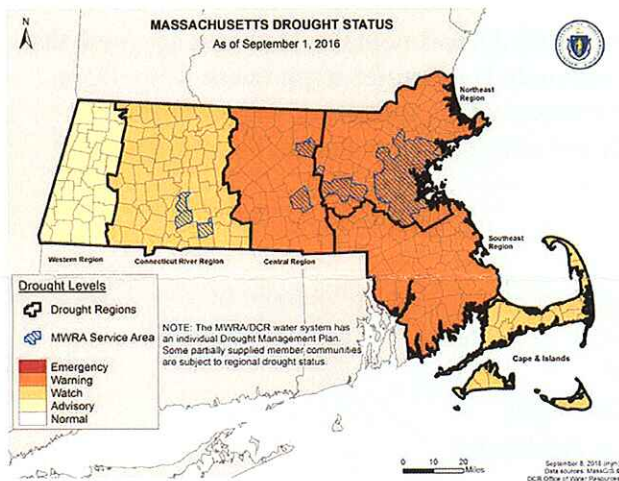
Martin Suuberg  
Commissioner

September 15, 2016

To: All registered or permitted Public Water Suppliers and all other users permitted under the Water Management Act  
Re: Drought Warning / Drought Watch / Drought Advisory Status

On September 9, 2016, with most of Massachusetts continuing to experience unprecedented drought, and with groundwater, stream flow and reservoir levels throughout the Commonwealth continuing to decline, Energy and Environmental Affairs Secretary Matthew Beaton issued an updated Drought Declaration. Current conditions are:

- Southeastern Massachusetts now at Drought Warning, up from Drought Watch in August;
- Central and Northeastern Massachusetts remain at Drought Warning;
- Cape Cod and Martha's Vineyard now at Drought Watch, up from Drought Advisory in August;
- the Connecticut River Valley remains at Drought Watch; and
- Western Massachusetts remains at Drought Advisory.



The latest drought status update is published on the Web at:

<http://www.mass.gov/eea/agencies/dcr/water-res-protection/water-data-tracking/drought-status.html>.

To confirm which drought region your town or city is in, go to the above website and in the "Drought Maps" section click on the link to "List of Massachusetts Towns by Drought Region".

The revised declaration resulted from the recommendation issued from the September 9<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Massachusetts Drought Management Task Force, comprised of state, federal and local officials. The revised declaration will be reviewed in October, and will remain in effect until water levels return to normal in the affected regions. The map below summarizes Massachusetts' drought status as of this month.

## **Drought Declaration and Water Management Act Permits**

The response by WMA permit holders to the drought and the need to conserve water has been exemplary. Over 170 communities currently have outdoor water use restrictions in place. If you hold a permit, please

review any conditions in your permit pertaining to outdoor water use to review the restrictions that must be implemented when the Drought Management Task Force declares a Drought Warning, Watch or Advisory. Be advised that nothing in a Water Management Permit or Registration prevents a water supplier or other water user from putting restrictions in place that are more stringent than those set forth in a permit, registration or in this guidance.

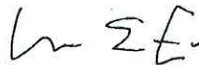
In response to this year's increasingly dry conditions, **MassDEP has enclosed more detailed guidance on appropriate outdoor water use restrictions at each drought levels with this letter.** This guidance reflects the need to limit outdoor water use to ensure essential needs such as drinking water, fire protection and crop irrigation are being met. It is generally more restrictive than the outdoor water use requirements in Water Management permits. MassDEP strongly recommends that all PWS's, even those without permit conditions requiring them to do so, institute non-essential outdoor water use restrictions.

**Public Water Suppliers (PWS) that impose mandatory use restrictions are required to notify the Department, 310 CMR 22.15(8).** The Department requests you also notify us when you impose voluntary use restrictions. Copies of the form used to notify us of the restrictions can be found at <http://www.mass.gov/eea/agencies/massdep/water/watersheds/municipal-water-use-restrictions.html>. Please send a completed form to: Jennifer D'Urso, Water Management Program, One Winter Street, Boston, MA 02108, or email at [jen.durso@state.ma.us](mailto:jen.durso@state.ma.us). This will help the Department respond to inquiries regarding use restrictions. We appreciate your efforts to help the Department maintain these lists which are useful for answering questions from the public, as well as targeting public outreach and compliance assistance efforts.

**Any PWS having difficulty meeting demands,** drought related or not, may want to request a Declaration of Water Supply Emergency ("Emergency Declaration") from the Department. The provisions of the Emergency Declaration process are outlined in regulations at 310 CMR 36.40. Suppliers should contact your DEP Regional Drinking Water Program Chief (see contact information below), or Duane LeVangie of the WMA Program at (617) 292-5706, to discuss concerns or begin the Emergency Declaration process.

The Emergency Declaration will require the PWS to submit a plan for Departmental review and approval that includes provisions to remedy the emergency. Such a plan could include measures to purchase water from another supplier, use emergency sources, implement aggressive conservation measures, and provide a mechanism to restrict outside water use for those PWSs that do not currently have the ability to implement such measures.

Very truly yours,



Douglas E. Fine  
Assistant Commissioner  
Bureau of Water Resources

Cc: Duane LeVangie, WMA Program Chief, DEP Boston (617-292-5706)  
Thomas Mahin, Drinking Water Chief, DEP NERO (978-694-3226)  
Robert Bostwick, Drinking Water Chief, DEP CERO (508-849-4036)  
Richard Rondeau, Drinking Water Chief, DEP SERO (508-946-2816)  
Deirdre Doherty, Drinking Water Chief, DEP WERO (413-755-2148)  
Rebecca Weidman, Director, BRP-DWM, DEP Boston

Jen Pedersen, MWVA  
Julia Blatt, Mass River Alliance





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## Guidance on Water Conservation and Emergency Planning

### Flushing Programs

Suppliers may consider delaying routine pipe flushing until later in the fall, if such a delay will not adversely affect water quality. Suppliers with mandatory flushing schedules should contact your DEP Regional Drinking Water Program Chief to discuss concerns or to delay routinely scheduled pipe flushing.

### Outdoor Water Use Restrictions for Specific Drought Levels

Limiting outdoor water use helps ensure that enough water is available for essential needs, including drinking water, fire protection, crop irrigation and harvesting and our natural resources. Towns may have particular circumstances that make limiting water use more urgent to ensure water in an emergency.

Nothing in a Water Management Permit or Registration prevents a water supplier from implementing water use restrictions that are more stringent than those set forth in their permit, registration or in this guidance.

#### **Regions in Drought Warning: Severe drought conditions**

- Outdoor water use should be banned.

#### **Regions in Drought Watch: Moderate drought conditions**

- Outdoor watering should be limited to “handheld” with a hose or a watering can after 5 p.m. or before 9 a.m. (to avoid evaporative losses).
- Outdoor watering with irrigation systems and sprinklers should be banned.
- Watering of municipal parks and recreation fields with irrigation systems and sprinklers may continue, at the water supplier’s discretion, before 9 a.m. and after 5 p.m.
- Filling swimming pools, washing cars and washing buildings should be banned.

#### **Regions in Drought Advisory: Conditions are abnormally dry**

- Outdoor watering with irrigation systems and sprinklers should be limited to no more than one day per week before 9 a.m. and after 5 p.m.
- Watering with a handheld hose should be limited to after 5 p.m. or before 9 a.m. (to avoid evaporative losses).

Households and businesses that draw water from private wells should conserve water by reducing indoor and outdoor water usage, and by abiding by the water use restrictions in place in their community.

In Water Management permits, certain water uses are not subject to mandatory restrictions. The following water uses should be exempted from mandatory water restrictions and water bans.

- For health or safety reasons;
- For the production of food and fiber;
- For the maintenance of livestock;

- To meet the core functions of a business (for example, irrigation by plant nurseries as necessary to maintain stock).

### **Emergency Response Plans**

With drought conditions persisting throughout the Commonwealth, now is a good time to review your emergency response plan and assess your preparedness to deal with drought conditions (and other extreme weather conditions). For more information on emergency response planning, visit <http://www.mass.gov/eea/agencies/massdep/water/drinking/water-systems-ops.html>.