

News from the New Hampshire Department of Environmental Services

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N.H. Drought is Widespread; Conserving Water is Key

CONCORD, NH – The New Hampshire Drought Management Team, coordinated by New Hampshire Department of Environmental Services (NHDES) and composed of state and federal agency representatives and stakeholders, met on July 19, 2018, to discuss drought conditions and impacts. Currently, the U.S. Drought Monitor categorizes 62% of the state, mostly in the southern half, as moderate drought and the remainder of the state as abnormally dry. Based on this development, the team agreed that the most important recommendation right now is for the public to be mindful about outdoor water use and conserving resources. Recommended steps to take include reducing or eliminating landscape watering, limiting any watering to between 7 PM and 5 AM, and suspending the washing down of large outdoor surfaces such as cars, homes and driveways. Currently, 47 community water systems have imposed outdoor water use restrictions and the number is expected to increase as drought persists.

Dr. Mary Stampone, New Hampshire State Climatologist, confirmed that drought conditions are not as severe as they were at this same time of year during the 2016 drought, but she said this drought has come on just as quickly and is more widespread. She stated that the development of the drought is a result of below average rainfall in the late spring and early summer coupled with high temperatures, while the 2016 drought was compounded by an early spring and a less-than-average snowpack. Dr. Stampone made it clear that while rain is in the forecast for the upcoming week, there is an equal chance of above or below average rainfall and a likelihood of above average temperatures for the upcoming month, meaning that drought conditions may continue through August.

Homeowners on private wells and many smaller community water systems can be more susceptible to the impacts of drought, as they often do not have the resources larger water systems have to manage drought, such as full-time staff, the technology to track water source levels, or a diversity of water sources on which to rely. Also, finances for well improvements or to drill a new well may be very limited; therefore, during a drought, these water users need to curb water use early. Conservation tips and drought emergency guidance for homeowners on private wells, community water systems, municipalities and the public may be found on the NHDES Drought Management webpage. Go to the “A-Z list” at www.des.nh.gov and scroll down to Drought Management.

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