



Department of Environmental Protection

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

Charles D. Baker
Governor

Karyn E. Polito
Lieutenant Governor

Kathleen A. Theoharides
Secretary

Martin Suuberg
Commissioner

September 9, 2020

Subject: Massachusetts Drought Advisory Status

Dear Registered and Permitted Users Under the Water Management Act:

On September 4, 2020, Secretary of Energy and Environmental Affairs Kathleen Theoharides maintained the Level 2 - Significant Drought declaration for the entire Commonwealth, including the Western, Connecticut River Valley, Central, Northeast, Southeast, Cape Cod, and Islands drought regions, based on advice from the Massachusetts Drought Management Task Force. The map below summarizes Massachusetts' current drought status.

The Massachusetts Drought Management Plan Drought, updated in 2019, (<https://www.mass.gov/doc/massachusetts-drought-management-plan/download>) presents the criteria used to evaluate conditions, as well as Massachusetts' seven drought regions (Western, Connecticut River Valley, Central, Northeast, Southeast, Cape Cod and Islands), and five drought levels (Level 0 – Normal, Level 1 – Mild Drought (formerly Advisory), Level 2 – Significant Drought (formerly Watch), Level 3 – Critical Drought (formerly Warning) and Level 4 – Emergency Drought). The extended drought conditions this summer have left grasses, shrubs and forests very dry across most of the state, and extremely dry in areas of the Southeast, resulting in increased wildfire risk and added challenges for firefighting agencies.

Limiting nonessential outdoor use, as outlined in Water Management permits and in the guidance below, is one of the most effective ways to minimize the impacts of drought on water supply and the environment, and ensure there is enough water for fire protection. All these steps will help reduce water use to ensure essential needs such as drinking water and fire protection are being met, and habitats have enough water to recover.

Drought Declaration and Water Management Act Permits

A Drought declaration triggers the following activities by the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection (MassDEP or Department) and other applicable agencies:

- closer detailed monitoring of developing conditions;
- close coordination among state and federal agencies;
- and technical outreach and assistance for the affected municipalities.

Water Management Act (WMA) permittees, particularly public water suppliers and golf course operators, may have permit conditions requiring that non-essential outdoor water use be reduced or restricted in response to the drought declaration. **If you hold a WMA permit, please continue to implement conditions pertaining to outdoor water use limitations required when the Drought Management Task Force declares a Drought Advisory (now a Level 2 - Significant Drought) or higher.** In addition, the guidance below outlines

This information is available in alternate format. Contact Michelle Waters-Ekanem, Director of Diversity/Civil Rights at 617-292-5751.

TTY# MassRelay Service 1-800-439-2370

MassDEP Website: www.mass.gov/dep

additional measures included in the Massachusetts Drought Plan that have been developed specifically for Level 2 Drought. This guidance goes beyond the measures in WMA permits, but is recommended in order to address current conditions. Water suppliers and other WMA permittees are welcome to implement other, more stringent, water use restrictions if needed to address local circumstances.

Other WMA permit holders such as industrial, commercial, or agricultural users, should also review their permits for water use restriction requirements. MassDEP recommends that permittees whose permits do not include outdoor water use restrictions (generally older permits that have not been revised in recent years) and those registered only also consider instituting non-essential outdoor water use restrictions following the guidance provided below.

Public Water Suppliers (PWS) that impose mandatory use restrictions are required to notify the Department, 310 CMR 22.15(8) within 14 days of implementing such restrictions. The Department requests you also provide notification when you impose voluntary water use restrictions. A form to notify the Department can be found at <http://www.mass.gov/eea/agencies/massdep/water/watersheds/municipal-water-use-restrictions.html>.

The Department requests that all **golf course operators** notify us when you put your Seasonal Demand Management Plan or other required restrictions in place. Copies of the notification forms for golf courses can be found at <https://www.mass.gov/info-details/outdoor-water-use-restrictions-for-cities-towns-and-golf-courses>.

Please send a completed form to: Jennifer D'Urso, Water Management Program, MassDEP, One Winter Street, Boston, MA 02108, or email at jen.durso@state.ma.us. This will assist the Department in responding to inquiries regarding use restrictions. We appreciate your effort 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 their MassDEP 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 public water suppliers 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.

MassDEP appreciates your efforts to conserve water to minimize the impacts of this drought.

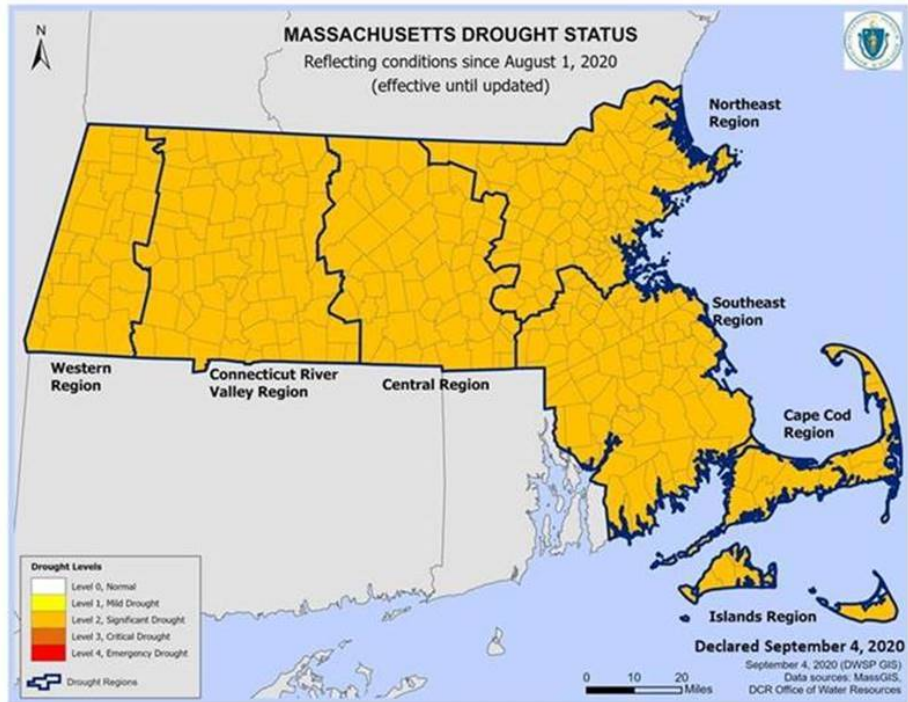
Very truly yours,



Kathleen Baskin
Assistant Commissioner, Bureau of Water Resources

Cc: Duane LeVangie, WMA Program Chief, DEP Boston (617-292-5706)
Amy LaChance, 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)
Lealdon Langley, Director, BRP-DWM, DEP Boston
Stephen Estes-Smargiassi, Massachusetts Water Resources Authority
Jennifer Pedersen, Massachusetts Water Works Association
Julia Blatt, Massachusetts Rivers Alliance



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 Regions” section click on the link to “Maps of MA Drought Regions with Lists of Cities and Towns”. Your drought region may have changed when the “Massachusetts Drought Management Plan” was updated in September 2019.

Guidance for instituting non-essential outdoor water use restrictions at Level 2 – Significant Drought

Outdoor Water Use Restrictions

Residents and Businesses:

- Minimize overall water use;
- Limit outdoor watering to hand-held hoses or watering cans, to be used only after 5 p.m. or before 9 a.m. one day a week.

Immediate Steps for Communities:

- Adopt and implement the state’s nonessential outdoor water use restrictions for drought; Level 2 restriction calls for limiting outdoor watering to hand-held hoses or watering cans, to be used only after 5 p.m. or before 9 a.m.
- Limit or prohibit installation of new sod, seeding, and/or landscaping; watering during or within 48 hours after measurable rainfall; washing of hard surfaces (sidewalks, patios, driveways, siding); personal vehicle or boat washing; operation of non-recirculating fountains; filling of swimming pools, hot tubs, and backyard informal rinks.
- Implement drought surcharge or seasonal water rates.
- Establish water-use reduction targets for all water users and identify top water users and conduct targeted outreach to help curb their use.

Short- and Medium-Term Steps for Communities:

- Establish a year-round water conservation program that includes public education and communication;
- Provide timely information to local residents and businesses;
- Check emergency inter-connections for water supply; and
- Develop a local drought management plan using guidance outlined in the state [Drought Management Plan](#).

For further information on water conservation and what residents and communities can do, visit the Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs’ [drought page](#).