

News from the New Hampshire Department of Environmental Services

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Moderate Drought Declared for Part of New Hampshire

Concord, NH - According to today's U.S. Drought Monitor, the southern half of the state has been elevated from "Abnormally Dry" (D01) to "Moderate Drought" (D1), while the remainder of the state continues to experience "Abnormally Dry" (D0) conditions. These conditions, a result of an exceptionally low snowpack this winter and lack of precipitation, have impacted rivers and streams, groundwater, soil moisture, and reservoirs. Due to these conditions the State Drought Management Plan is being implemented. This plan ensures the State develops, coordinates and implements all possible approaches to responding to the drought. One of the first steps, based on the increasing intensity of the drought will be the initial coordination of the State Drought Management Team (DMT), a collaborative team of state, federal, municipal and regional agencies; industry and non-governmental organizations; and academia. Ongoing actions include: assessing reservoir impacts and adjusting operations, working with drinking water systems statewide and ensuring the public is informed of the impacts and conservation measures that should be employed now to avoid serious problems later in the summer.

Earlier this week, NHDES advised public water systems to carefully track water supplies and implement outdoor water use restrictions as needed. The state has requested systems report restrictions to NHDES to be publicized on the Drought Management webpage. Ninety-four systems have reported implementing outdoor usage restrictions.

NHDES is asking the public to abide by restrictions so essential and critical water needs of the community, residents, and businesses are met. NHDES encourages those relying on private residential wells to begin conserving now. Due to COVID-19, people are at home more often, which means a higher than usual demand on residential well supplies. To protect your well supply, it is recommended that outdoor water use be limited and water use be staggered, allowing the well time to recharge between demands.

Lake levels are starting to fall due to low inflows and evaporation. In an effort to slow the fall on the state's largest lakes, releases from the dams that impound those lakes have been reduced to the minimum needed to maintain instream flow needs downstream. As a result, many of the small hydropower projects on the state's tributary rivers are no longer able to generate power, although the hydropower projects on the main stem rivers, such as the Merrimack and Connecticut, continue to operate.

During drought conditions, it is especially important to be vigilant with wildfire prevention, especially making sure all fires are extinguished completely. Doing so can help reduce wildfire incidents and lower the potential for property loss, personal injury and even loss of life.

To view a map of drought conditions, a list of utilities restricting water use, and drought guidance for private well owners, go to the “A-Z list” at www.des.nh.gov and scroll down to Drought Management.