

## **Drought Update: Drought Intensifies/Last Chance to Conserve**

September 24, 2020

According to the U.S. Drought Monitor, drought is persisting across the state and the majority of Strafford County and parts of Rockingham, Merrimack, and Belknap have been elevated to “Extreme Drought” (D3), the third category out of four categories of drought. Scattered rain showers are expected early next week and the 6-10 day and 8-14 day precipitation probabilities lean toward near to above normal precipitation. According to the U.S. Seasonal Drought Outlook released on September 17, drought is likely to persist over the next three months, but drought intensity is also likely to improve.

This is only the second time since 2000, when the Drought Monitor was implemented, that parts of New Hampshire have experienced extreme drought. When these conditions occurred in 2016, hundreds of private well shortages were reported. Similar to 2016, well shortages are being reported from across the state. As the growing season winds down and cooler temperatures set in, there is only a small window of time left to eliminate non-essential outdoor use in an effort to sustain supplies to meet essential future needs as the drought persists.

NHDES is urging municipalities to implement municipal-wide lawn watering restrictions as authorized by RSA 41:11-d, which allows municipalities, including village districts, to restrict lawn watering activities on private well owners and community water systems within municipal boundaries. Curbing lawn water usage is imperative to sustaining supplies. NHDES is also working with public water suppliers to implement restrictions.

To date, 160 community water systems serving 325,700 people and seven municipalities with a total population of 60,300 have water use restrictions in place. See the [Restriction List and Map](#) for names of systems and municipalities implementing restrictions and a map of drought conditions by municipality.

### **Drought Update:**

According to the [U.S. Drought Monitor](#) released this morning, 8.5% of the state is categorized as “extreme drought” (D3), 80% of the state is categorized as “severe drought”(D2) and 11.5% of the state is categorized as “moderate drought” (D1).

Tip\* The [restriction map](#) includes town boundaries and drought categories, making it easy to identify if your municipality is experiencing drought.

All counties are experiencing a 30-day, 90-day, 180-day, and 360-day precipitation departures. Ninety-day departures range from -2.24” in Coos County to -4.58” in Grafton (<https://w1.weather.gov/data/TAR/ESPTAR>).

The majority of the state is experiencing below normal to low groundwater levels. For more information, see the [New Hampshire Groundwater Level Monitoring Report](#) for August 2020. Reports are released monthly.

### **Forecast and Outlooks:**

The short term forecast calls for above normal temperatures, a dry weekend, and a chance for scattered showers at the beginning of the week. Daytime highs will be in the 70s with 80s possible in the southern part of the state ([NOAA National Weather Service](#)).

The 6-10 day outlook probabilities tilt toward above normal precipitation and near normal temperatures. The 8-14 day outlook favors near normal precipitation and tilts toward below normal temperatures ([National Weather Service Climate Prediction Center](#)).

According to the [US Seasonal Drought Outlook](#), over the next three months, drought conditions are likely to improve, but persist across the majority of the state.