

Office of the Governor

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NEWS RELEASE

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RESERVOIR LEVELS AND STREAMFLOWS CONTINUE TO FALL GOVERNOR DECLARES DROUGHT WARNING

Governor Christie Whitman today announced a statewide drought warning due to the continued lack of rainfall and high temperatures that have resulted in low streamflows and below normal groundwater and reservoir levels.

"Over the past two months, the state has received less than two inches of rain compared to normal rainfall of more than eight inches during this time," Whitman said. "With this warning, we're asking all residents to conserve water, and we'll be asking the major water companies to work in coordination with us for maximum efficiency of water distribution."

"It is important that we do all we can now to conserve water, so we can postpone or possibly avoid the need to impose restrictions on water use," said the Governor.

The Governor has ordered all state agencies to immediately cut back on water use by not watering lawns or washing vehicles.

The Department of Environmental Protection (DEP), which oversees the state's water supplies, will hold two public hearings on the drought warning designation on Tuesday, Aug. 17, at 10 a.m. in Millburn Township municipal building on Millburn Avenue and Wednesday, Aug. 18, at 10 a.m. in the Mount Holly municipal building on Washington Street.

A drought warning gives the state greater authority to control water distribution within and among the water systems. A public hearing is required to allow DEP to order transfers of water, if necessary, between systems. If conditions worsen and those strategies become insufficient, a drought emergency will be declared, and water use restrictions will be imposed, if needed, regionally or statewide. If a drought emergency is declared by the Governor, a Water Emergency Task Force would be created with representatives from each of the state departments. DEP Commissioner Bob Shinn also would appoint a Drought Coordinator.

The combined reservoir levels for the four major systems that serve northeastern New Jersey are 73.5 percent full. This is 8.7 percent less than normal at this time of year (82.2 percent). These reservoir systems, United Water, Newark, North Jersey District Water Supply Commission and Jersey City, serve more than 2 million residents in all or parts of seven counties - Bergen, Essex, Hudson, Morris, Passaic, Somerset and Union.

"We need the cooperation of residents throughout the state to conserve water, whether they are served by surface or groundwater, public or private wells. We

strongly urge water customers, both residential and commercial, to abide by any local mandatory restrictions that have been imposed in response to increased water demand," Shinn said.

The past 12 months have been the driest in 33 years and stream flows are at record lows in many rivers. Record low streamflows were reported by the U.S. Geological Survey last week for the Cooper River in Camden County, the Great Egg Harbor River in Atlantic County, the Ramapo and Saddle rivers in Bergen County, the North Branch of the Rancocas Creek in Burlington County, and the Flat Brook in Sussex County.

Residents are asked to use good water conservation practices, and to refrain from watering lawns and washing vehicles. Indoors, residents are urged to fix leaky pipes, toilets and faucets, turn off faucets when not in use, install water conserving shower heads and faucet aerators, and run washing machines and dishwashers only when full. Other recommended measures include: water gardens in the evening; don't use the hose as a broom for cleaning sidewalks or driveways, and don't "top off" swimming pools.

Due to the dry conditions, DEP issued campfire restrictions on July 21 that prohibit campfires on the ground. For the area north of the Raritan River, only elevated grills may be used with gas, propane or electricity. In the central and southern parts of the state, where conditions are not as dry, campers may still use wood and charcoal in elevated grills at this time.

DEP also closed the swimming area at Spruce Run Recreation Area Friday due to low water levels.

STREAM FLOW CONDITIONS IN NEW JERSEY WATERWAYS SETTING RECORD LOWS

Flat Brook - near Flatbrookville

July 29: 7.1 cubic feet per second
Historic low: 9.5 cubic feet per second
Mean Average: 50 cubic feet per second

Saddle River - Lodi

July 29: 7.6 cubic feet per second
Historic low: 15 cubic feet per second
Mean Average: 67 cubic feet per second

Cooper River - Haddonfield

July 29: 6.6 cubic feet per second
Historic low: 7.6 cubic feet per second
Mean Average: 26 cubic feet per second

Great Egg Harbor River - Folsom

July 29: 19 cubic feet per second
Historic low: 22 cubic feet per second

Mean Average: 59 cubic feet per second

Ramapo River - near Mahwah

July 29: 10 cubic feet per second

Historic low: 13 cubic feet per second

Mean Average: 77 cubic feet per second

North Branch of the Rancocas Creek - Pemberton

July 30: 30 cubic feet per second

Historic low: 36 cubic feet per second

Mean average: 120 cubic feet per second

Source: U.S. Geologic Survey (http://water.usgs.gov/cgi-bin/daily_flow?nj)