



Department of Environmental Protection

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December 21, 2016

To: All registered or permitted Public Water Suppliers and all other users permitted under the Water Management Act (WMA)
Re: December 2016 Drought Status Update

Although many areas of the state experienced some beneficial rainfall in November, totals for the month were below normal and serious drought conditions continue across Massachusetts. Therefore, on December 9, 2016, Energy and Environmental Affairs (EEA) Secretary Matthew Beaton declared that the following drought levels will remain in place throughout the Commonwealth:

- Drought Warning (severe drought conditions with over six consecutive months of below normal groundwater and stream flow) continues for the Northeast, Southeast, Central, Connecticut River Valley, and Western Regions of Massachusetts; and
- Drought Advisory (abnormally dry conditions with precipitation levels below normal for six out of seven consecutive months) continues on the Cape and Islands.



The continuing drought declaration is based on the recommendations issued from the December meeting of the Massachusetts Drought Management Task Force. Drought conditions will continue to be reviewed monthly, and the drought declaration will remain in effect until conditions return to normal.

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>.

As the drought persists, MassDEP urges all public water suppliers and the public to be mindful of the amount of water they are using, and to reduce indoor water use, address leaks as soon as possible, and conduct water audits to identify areas of leaks and potential water conservation. All these steps are needed now to help reduce water use to ensure essential needs such as drinking water and fire protection can be met, habitats have water to recover, and to prepare for the months ahead, including next summer, should dry conditions continue.

Indoor Water Savings In order to help the public conserve water and reduce the overall demand on water resources, the Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation has developed a one-page tip sheet on indoor and outdoor water saving ideas for homeowners. Suppliers can link to the tip sheet at <http://www.mass.gov/eea/docs/dcr/watersupply/rainfall/tips-for-saving-water-8-18-16.pdf>, and can share it with their customers by posting it on their own website. For information on water conservation and what you can do, visit the EEA drought page at <http://www.mass.gov/eea/drought/>, the Department of

Conservation and Recreation's drought management page at <http://www.mass.gov/eea/agencies/dcr/water-res-protection/water-data-tracking/drought-status.html>, and the MassDEP Water Conservation page at <http://www.mass.gov/eea/agencies/massdep/water/watersheds/water-conservation.html>.

Water Main Flushing Flushing programs can be an important part of system maintenance and providing high quality water. However, during this ongoing drought, suppliers should consider delaying routine pipe flushing **if such a delay will not adversely affect water quality**. Deferring flushing during drought conditions both reduces water use, and avoids sending a confusing signal to consumers when they are being urged to conserve water both indoors and outdoors.

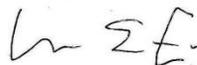
Suppliers with mandatory flushing schedules or water quality concerns will want to continue their flushing program as weather conditions allow. If suppliers have any concerns about their pipe flushing program, they should contact the DEP Regional Drinking Water Program Chief to discuss their program.

Emergency Response Plans With drought conditions persisting throughout the Commonwealth, now is a good time for PWSs to review Emergency Response Plans and assess preparedness to deal with drought conditions (and other extreme weather conditions). For more information on emergency response planning, visit <http://www.mass.gov/eea/agencies/massdep/water/drinking/water-systems-ops.html>.

Declaration of Water Supply Emergency MassDEP will continue to provide technical assistance to communities on managing systems and the use of emergency connections and emergency water supplies. Any PWS having difficulty meeting demands, drought related or not, may 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 your DEP 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.

An Emergency Declaration will require the PWS to submit a plan to remedy the emergency for MassDEP review and approval. The 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.

Very truly yours,



Douglas E. Fine, Assistant Commissioner
Bureau of Water Resources

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