

DROUGHT – FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

What is a Drought and what are the different levels of drought?

A drought is a period of unusually persistent dry weather that continues long enough to cause serious problems such as crop damage, water supply shortages, and habitat loss. The severity of the drought depends upon how acute the water deficit is, the duration, and the size of the affected area.

To get the latest information on the various drought levels in Massachusetts click [here](#).

Who establishes drought in Massachusetts? How is it determined?

Massachusetts has a [Drought Management Plan](#) that outlines how drought is defined using 5 drought levels for six drought regions across the state. The drought levels are established after a review of various parameters - precipitation, streamflow, groundwater levels, reservoir levels, fire danger, and crop moisture. To see the latest hydrological conditions click [here](#).

Massachusetts also has a [Drought Management Task Force](#) (DMTF) which consists of officials from state and federal agencies and professional organizations with responsibility for areas likely to be affected by drought conditions and/or who have technical knowledge about drought conditions. The DMTF makes drought recommendations to the Secretary of Energy and Environmental Affairs who in turn declares the drought for Massachusetts. The DMTF also assists in monitoring, coordinating and managing responses.

What level of Drought is my area in?

Massachusetts is divided into six regions for the purposes of drought. Although we are a small state, each region experiences and responds to weather patterns a little differently. To see which drought region your town is in click [here](#). To check the drought level of the region your town is in click [here](#).

Where does my drinking water come from?

Your water supply can come from public or private wells that draw water from underground, or from surface water stored in a reservoir and/or drawn directly from a river. Some communities have a combination of these sources. If you are an MWRA community you get your water from the Quabbin and the Wachusett reservoirs located in central Massachusetts. Some towns are partially served by the MWRA and partially by local sources. Contact your local Department of Public Works to find out the source of your water.



How does the drought impact me?

Water scarcity impacts all users of water. With decreasing amounts of rain, there is less water available in our reservoirs and in the ground to meet our needs, and even less for lakes, ponds, rivers, streams and wetlands, and the wildlife that depend on them. No matter where you get your water, any water conservation efforts you take will help alleviate the impacts on your source of water. It will help stretch your water supply for a longer period of time until conditions improve, and it will also help ensure that your town has enough water for fire protection (the likelihood of fires increases as conditions get dry).

I have my own private well; why can't I use as much water as I want?

Being mindful of the amount of water you use, and following the same watering restrictions as your town's public water supply system will help stretch your water supplies for a longer period of time. It will also allow your community to have enough water for fire protection, public health and safety, and the environment. So remember, even if you have your own well, it almost always still comes from the same place as the public water supply, as long as you are in the same river basin.

Turning off water when brushing teeth of shaving can save 10 gallons/person/day

What can I do to help during a drought?

Conserving water is always a good idea, but it is especially important during times of drought. We can all help reduce the impact of the drought by using less water. As the drought becomes more severe, we can increase our conservation in response. For example:

- Avoid all outdoor watering. If you have a vegetable patch that needs some water, use a hand-held device only. Lawns naturally go dormant when water is scarce and can revive when conditions improve.
- In your landscape use drought-resistant plants and employ [water-smart landscaping principles](#).
- Inside the building, avoid letting the water run, take shorter showers, and wash only full loads of dishes and laundry. Be extremely mindful of indoor water use and use only what is necessary.
- Talk to your friends and neighbors about conserving water
- For additional tips for saving water go to <http://www.mass.gov/eea/drought/#tips>

Installing a high efficiency toilet can save 19 gallons/person/day

Washing full loads of clothes can save 15-45 gallons/load and washing a full load of dishes can save 5-15 gallons/load



Who can I go to if I need additional water or resources?

- **If you are a Resident with a private well** that is running dry, contact your local city or town office, and board of health to report that your well is going dry; then contact your public water supplier (if there is one in your town), or your local fire department to see if you can temporarily hook up to their system. For a more long-term solution, consider deepening your well and contact a well driller. If several wells in an area are going dry, you can consider contracting with a water tanker to provide you with water in the interim. For a list of private water tankers and suppliers, click [here](#).

- **If you are a small business or a farmer with a private well** that is running dry,
 - o contact your local city or town office, and board of health to report that your well is going dry;
 - o a farmer may contact Massachusetts Department of Agricultural Resources for assistance;
 - o Governor Baker has made available micro-loans for small businesses and farmers that have been impacted by the drought. For information on the Massachusetts Drought Emergency Loan Fund click [here](#).
 - o The U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA) announced federal Economic Injury Disaster Loans for small businesses, small agricultural cooperatives, and small businesses engaged in aquaculture, and private nonprofit organizations located in the counties of Essex, Middlesex and Worcester. Applicants may apply online using the Electronic Loan Application (ELA) via SBA's secure website at <https://disasterloan.sba.gov/ela>. Disaster loan information and application forms may also be obtained by calling the SBA's Customer Service Center at 800-659-2955 (800-877-8339 for the deaf and hard-of-hearing) or by sending an email to disastercustomerservice@sba.gov. Loan applications can be downloaded from www.sba.gov/disaster. Completed applications should be mailed to: U.S. Small Business Administration, Processing and Disbursement Center, 14925 Kingsport Road, Fort Worth, TX 76155. Completed loan applications must be returned to SBA no later than April 25, 2017.



Who can I talk to in state government?

- For general drought related matters, contact Dan Sieger (Daniel.Sieger@state.ma.us) or Vandana Rao (Vandana.Rao@state.ma.us) at the Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs
- For drought parameters and data, contact Anne Carroll (Anne.carroll@state.ma.us) at the Office of Water Resources, Department of Conservation and Recreation
- For water supply related matters, contact the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection at,
 - Duane LeVangie, WMA Program Chief, DEP Boston at Duane.levangie@state.ma.us
 - Thomas Mahin, Drinking Water Chief, DEP NERO at Thomas.Mahin@state.ma.us
 - Robert Bostwick, Drinking Water Chief, DEP CERO at Robert.Bostwick@state.ma.us
 - Richard Rondeau, Drinking Water Chief, DEP SERO at Richard.Rondeau@state.ma.us
 - Deirdre Doherty, Drinking Water Chief, DEP WERO at Deirdre.Doherty@state.ma.us
- For Agriculture related matters, contact Alisha Bouchard (Alisha.bouchard@state.ma.us) at the Department of Agricultural Resources

