



October 17, 2022

Drought Watch Remains for 20 Counties, Lifted for 16 Counties

Harrisburg, PA – The Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) announced today after a meeting of the Commonwealth Drought Task Force that drought watch has been lifted for 16 counties and remains for 20 counties. Residents in those counties are asked to continue their voluntary water conservation.

“While significant recent rainfall has helped, groundwater and public water supply levels remain lower than normal ranges in some counties,” said DEP Acting Secretary Ramez Ziadeh. “We ask Pennsylvanians in these and adjacent counties to continue to use water wisely and follow simple water conservation tips to ease the demand for water.”

The following counties remain on drought watch: Cameron, Carbon, Centre, Clearfield, Clinton, Columbia, Dauphin, Juniata, Lebanon, Luzerne, Lycoming, Mifflin, Montour, Northampton, Northumberland, Perry, Potter, Schuylkill, Snyder, and Union counties.

Drought watch has been lifted for Berks, Bradford, Bucks, Delaware, Lackawanna, Lehigh, McKean, Monroe, Montgomery, Philadelphia, Pike, Sullivan, Susquehanna, Tioga, Wayne, and Wyoming counties.

For a map of drought declarations that’s updated daily, see the [DEP drought web page](#).

Residents on drought watch are asked to reduce their individual water use by 5% to 10%, or a reduction of three to six gallons of water per day.

Varying localized conditions may lead water suppliers or municipalities to ask residents for more stringent conservation actions. See the [list of public water suppliers](#) [link to PDF] that have requested or mandated water conservation in their communities.

Ways to Conserve Water at Home

There are many ways to conserve water at home, including:

- Run water only when necessary. Don’t let the faucet run while brushing your teeth or shaving. Shorten the time you let the water run to warm up before showering.
- Run the dishwasher and washing machine less often, and only with full loads.
- Water your garden in the cooler evening or morning hours, and direct the water to the ground at the base of the plant, so you don’t waste water through evaporation.
- Water your lawn only if necessary. Apply no more than 1 inch of water per week (use an empty can to determine how long it takes to water 1 inch). Avoid watering on windy and hot days. This pattern will encourage healthier, deeper grass roots. Over-watering is

wasteful, encourages fungal growth and disease, and results in shallow, compacted root systems that are more susceptible to drought.

- When mowing your lawn, set the blades to 2-3 inches high. Longer grass shades the soil, improving moisture retention. It also grows thicker and develops a deeper root system, so it can better survive drought.
- Check for and repair household leaks. For example, a leaking toilet can waste up to 200 gallons of water daily.
- Sweep your sidewalk, deck, or driveway instead of hosing it off.
- Replace older appliances with high-efficiency, front-loading models that use about 30 percent less water and 40%- 50% less energy.
- Install low-flow plumbing fixtures and aerators on faucets.
- Set up a rain barrel to be ready to repurpose rain when it does fall. For information, see this [Penn State Extension guide](#).

Find more tips at the [U.S. Environmental Protection Agency](#).

How DEP Determines Drought Conditions

To determine drought conditions, DEP assesses information on public water supply levels and data on four indicators: precipitation, surface water (stream and river) flow, groundwater level, and soil moisture.

The DEP Drought Coordinator monitors the indicators in close partnership with the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS), which maintains gauges in streams and wells in many locations across Pennsylvania.

There are normal ranges for all four indicators. DEP makes drought status recommendations after assessing departures from these ranges for all indicators for periods of 3-12 months. For a map that's updated daily to show the status of all four indicators for each county, see the [USGS Pennsylvania drought condition monitoring website](#).

DEP shares these data and its recommendations with the state and federal agencies and other organizations that make up the Commonwealth Drought Task Force. Drought watch and warning declarations are determined by DEP, with the concurrence of the task force.

Drought emergency declarations follow the same process, with final approval by the governor. No county is in drought warning or emergency status at this time.

For more information on how DEP monitors conditions and makes drought status declarations, see the [drought management fact sheet](#).

The next Commonwealth Drought Task Force meeting will be held in approximately three weeks.

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