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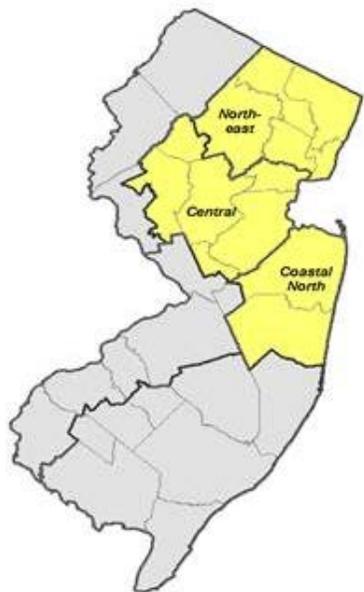
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WATER SUPPLY DROUGHT WATCH ISSUED FOR THREE NEW JERSEY REGIONS*RESIDENTS ASKED TO VOLUNTARILY CONSERVE WATER*

(15/P80) TRENTON – Department of Environmental Protection Commissioner Bob Martin today issued a drought watch for New Jersey's Northeast, Central, and Coastal North water supply regions, urging residents in the affected areas to voluntarily conserve water and for the rest of the state to practice wise water use due to continued dry weather and above-average temperatures.



The drought watch is prompted by continued rainfall deficits that have decreased reservoir, ground water and streamflow levels in the three regions.

The purpose of the watch is to raise public awareness, formally alert all water suppliers in the region of the situation, and to seek voluntary cooperation to preserve existing supplies in the affected regions, with water demand still high.

The three affected drought regions include all or parts of 12 counties, including Bergen, Essex, Hudson, Hunterdon, Mercer, Middlesex, Monmouth, Morris, Ocean, Passaic, Somerset and Union.

"We have been carefully tracking precipitation, stream flows, ground water and reservoir levels since the spring and over the course of the very dry summer," Commissioner Martin said.

"While it is not uncommon to see reduced stream flows and

ground water levels by the end of the summer season, we are beginning to observe signs of stress in our water supply indicators, and this warrants closer scrutiny and public cooperation."

"We are asking residents to be aware of the situation and use water more carefully and deliberately, especially when it comes to lawn watering and other non-essential uses. The goal is to moderate water demand through voluntary conservation."

Some suggested water conservation tips include:

- Do not over-water lawns and landscaping. Two times per week for 30 minutes in morning or late evening typically is sufficient. Use a hose with a hand-held nozzle to water flowers and shrubs.
- Avoid watering lawns and plants during the heat of the day, as this promotes evaporation and

water waste.

- Use a broom to sweep the sidewalk, rather than a hose.
- To save water at home, fix leaky faucets and pipes.
- Turn off the faucet while brushing teeth and shaving.
- Run washing machines and dishwashers only when full.

The DEP has observed significant reservoir level declines in some water systems, particularly United Water New Jersey's Oradell reservoir system in Bergen County. While measurable rainfall during the second week of September provided some temporary relief, it did not appreciably improve the water supply situation in the three drought regions. Additionally, the National Weather Service's Climate Prediction Center is projecting above-average temperatures and dry weather to continue through October.

United Water New Jersey serves approximately 800,000 customers in Bergen and northern Hudson counties. Although combined reservoir storage across Northeastern New Jersey is only marginally below normal for this time of year, the region is potentially vulnerable because of United Water New Jersey's reliance on other major suppliers to complement its supply when demands are unusually high. If current conditions persist, other interconnected water systems could be adversely affected if inflated demands are left unchecked.

Other drinking water supply indicators are also showing signs of stress from the dry weather and high water demands, including stream flows and ground water levels, as well as declining reservoir storage in the New Jersey Water Supply Authority's Spruce Run and Manasquan Reservoirs in Hunterdon and Monmouth counties, respectively.

While plentiful rains in June replenished reservoirs, stream flow and ground water sources, very dry, warm weather in July and August resulted in high water usage that has continued into September.

If conditions remain warm and dry and water demands do not decrease, DEP will consider further regulatory actions, such as the designation of a drought warning. Under a drought warning, the DEP may order water purveyors to develop alternative sources of water or transfer of water between areas of New Jersey with relatively more water to those with less.

"We are asking residents across the state, and particularly in the three drought watch regions, to use water sparingly, and to voluntarily reduce nonessential water use, especially outdoors," said Dan Kennedy, DEP Assistant Commissioner for Water Resources Management. "We advocate for conservation of water at all times. But responsible water use at this time is especially important. We ask that residents take voluntary steps such as limiting lawn and landscaping watering, and cutting back on water-related chores at home, such as car washing. This could save millions of gallons of water daily."

For more state water supply status information, visit: www.njdrought.org/status.html.

For more information on water conservation, visit: www.njdrought.org/ideas.html

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