



Commonwealth of Massachusetts
Executive Office of Energy & Environmental Affairs

Department of Environmental Protection

100 Cambridge Street Suite 900 Boston, MA 02114 • 617-292-5500

Maura T. Healey
Governor

Kimberley Driscoll
Lieutenant Governor

Rebecca L. Tepper
Secretary

Bonnie Heiple
Commissioner

March 21, 2025

Re: **Significant and Critical Drought Conditions Persist in All Massachusetts Drought Regions**

Dear Water Management Registrants and Permittees:

As we approach spring and the beginning of the irrigation season, we want to reach out to you with updates on the ongoing drought in Massachusetts which has not dissipated over the winter months. Following nearly seven months of below-normal precipitation, on March 7, 2025, Energy and Environmental Affairs (EEA) Secretary Rebecca Tepper declared:

- **Level 3-Critical Drought in the Northeast, Central and Connecticut River Valley Drought Regions, and**
- **Level 2-Significant Drought throughout the rest of Massachusetts (the Southeast, Cape, Islands and Western Drought Regions).**

This is not where we had hoped to be this spring. We are still in a precipitation deficit across the state and despite temporary surges in streamflow from recent precipitation events, streamflow and groundwater have worsened in nearly all regions, and recharge that typically occurs at this time of the year to reservoirs and groundwater is diminished.

Therefore, MassDEP encourages everyone to begin the 2025 season with an eye to conservation. Please review any conditions pertaining to outdoor water use restrictions in your Water Management permit or registration. Any drought triggered restrictions required through a Water Management registration will be in effect at the start of the irrigation season on April 1st this year. **If you hold both a registration and a permit that includes seasonal restrictions on nonessential outdoor water use, then the restrictions required in your permit are controlling.**

- **Public Water Suppliers (PWS)** that impose mandatory use restrictions are required to notify MassDEP, per 310 CMR 22.15(8). PWSs that impose voluntary water use restrictions are asked to notify MassDEP as well. A MassDEP Notification of Water Use Restriction form can be found at <https://www.mass.gov/info-details/outdoor-water-use-restrictions-for-cities-towns-and-golf-courses#current-city-and-town-water-restrictions>.

Please send a completed form to Brittany Segill by email (preferred) at brittany.segill@mass.gov, or by US Mail to Mass DEP Water Management Program, 100 Cambridge Street, Suite 900, Boston, MA 02114.

Outreach Materials for the Public: The Department of Conservation and Recreation Office of Water Resources has developed a library of outreach materials that PWSs can use on their websites to inform customers about the drought and about specific conservation measures. The library of outreach materials can be found at: <https://www.mass.gov/info-details/water-resources-toolkit-library-of-outreach-materials>. Please feel free to use any of the materials here on your departmental websites or in any other outreach to your customers. Two pieces you might find useful about pipe flushing and increased fire danger during drought can be found at the end of this mailing.

Any PWS having difficulty meeting demands, drought-related or not, may request a Declaration of Water Supply Emergency (“Emergency Declaration”) from MassDEP. The provisions of the Emergency Declaration process are outlined in regulations at 310 CMR 36.40. Suppliers should contact their MassDEP Regional Drinking Water Program Chief (see contact information below), or Duane LeVangie of the WMA Program at (617) 780-1962, to discuss concerns or begin the Emergency Declaration process.

The Emergency Declaration will require the public water supplier to submit a plan for MassDEP review and approval that includes provisions to remedy the emergency. Such a plan could include measures to purchase water from another supplier, use emergency sources, implement aggressive conservation measures, and provide a mechanism to restrict nonessential outdoor water use for those PWSs that do not currently have enforcement capability to implement such measures.

MassDEP appreciates your efforts to conserve water and manage this valuable resource.

Very truly yours,

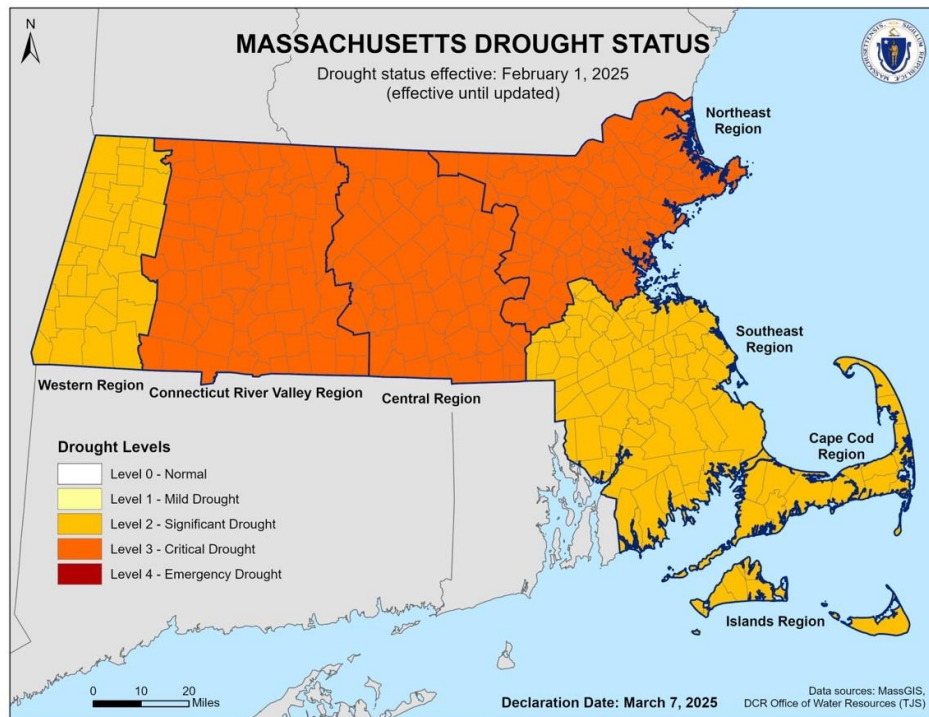


Kathleen Baskin
Assistant Commissioner, Bureau of Water Resources

Cc: Duane LeVangie, WMA Program Chief, DEP Boston (617-780-1962)
Melissa Dwinell, Drinking Water Chief, DEP NERO (857-278-5348)
Robert Bostwick, Drinking Water Chief, DEP CERO (774-239-6003)
Jim McLaughlin, Drinking Water Chief, DEP SERO (857-260-1002)
Andrew Kelly, Drinking Water Chief, DEP WERO (617-875-2710)
Julia Blatt, Mass Rivers Alliance
Lydia Olson, Mass Rivers Alliance
Jennifer Pederson, MWWA
Steve Estes-Smargiassi, MWRA

Summary Guidance for Public Water Suppliers

If you hold both a **Water Management Registration** and a **Permit** that includes seasonal restrictions on nonessential outdoor water use, **then the permit is controlling** and you are required to institute the restrictions detailed in your permit.



Level 3 (Critical Drought) – Northeast, Central and Connecticut Regions

All nonessential outdoor water uses should be banned.

Level 2 (Significant Drought) - Southeast, Cape, Islands and Western Drought Regions

All nonessential outdoor water uses should be banned, except that watering ornamentals and flower gardens with drip irrigation, hand-hold hose or watering cans may be permitted, to be used only after 5 p.m. or before 9 a.m.

Private Wells

Households and businesses that draw water from private wells should conserve water by abiding by the water use restrictions in place in their community.

Restricted Nonessential Outdoor Water Uses do NOT include use required for:

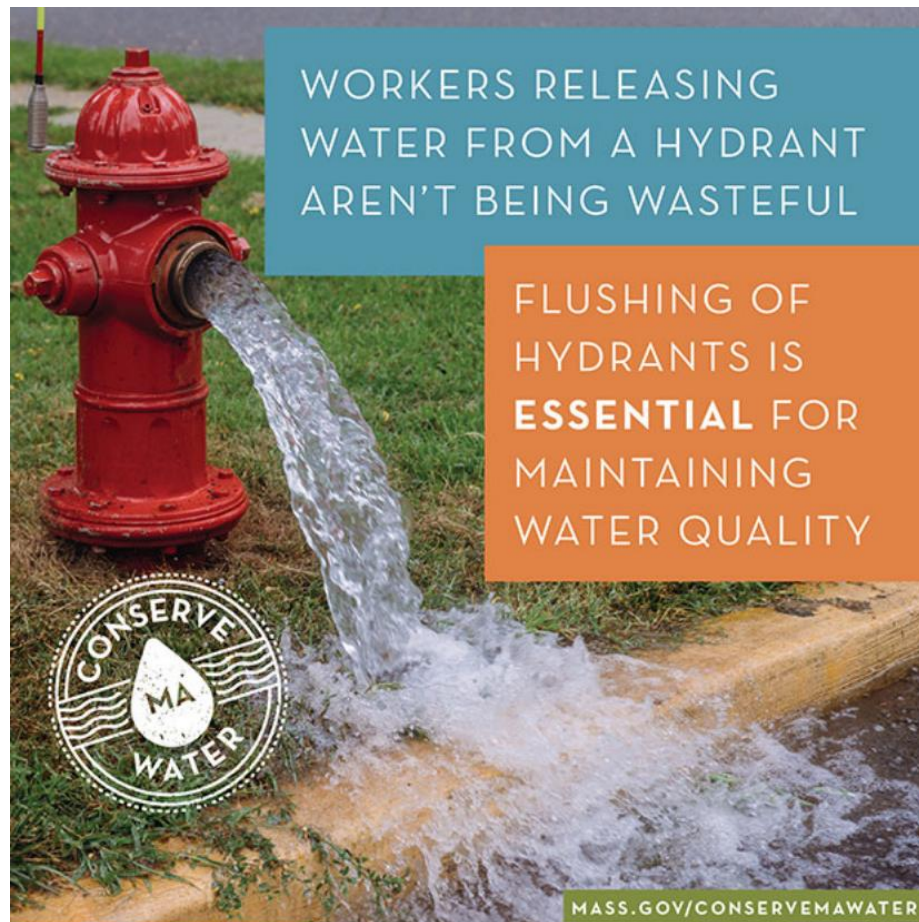
- health or safety, including public cooling facilities such as splash pads and swimming pools,
- washing boats, engines, or marine equipment to prevent saltwater corrosion or the transfer of invasive aquatic species,
- producing food, including vegetable gardens, fiber, and for maintaining livestock,
- meeting the core functions of a business, including
 - plant nurseries to maintain stock,

- golf courses as needed to maintain greens and tees, and limited fairway watering,
- venues for weddings and special events that water gardens, flowers and ornamental plants with a hand-held hose or drip irrigation,
- professional washing as needed to apply paint, preservatives, stucco, pavement, or cement to buildings, parking lots, driveways and sidewalks,
- irrigating public parks before 9:00 a.m. and after 5:00 p.m.,
- irrigating recreation fields before 9:00 a.m. and after 5:00 p.m.,
- irrigating publicly funded shade trees and trees in the public right-of-way; or
- establishing new lawn to stabilize soil following new construction, or repair/replacement of a Title 5 system.

Other Emergency Measure to Consider

- **Flushing Programs** - Suppliers may consider delaying routine pipe flushing until later in the fall, if such a delay will not adversely affect water quality. Suppliers with mandatory flushing schedules should contact your DEP Regional Drinking Water Program Chief to discuss concerns or to delay routinely scheduled pipe flushing.
- **Review Emergency Interconnections** – Suppliers whose supplies may be vulnerable if drought conditions continue should now review their available interconnections to other sources or to neighboring water supply systems and evaluate how quickly interconnections can be activated if needed.
- **Emergency Response Plans** - For the last year, the MassDEP Drinking Water Program has been working with PWSs to ensure that all emergency response plans are brought up to date as required by 310 CMR 22.04(13). Suppliers should review their plan and assess preparedness to deal with drought conditions (and other extreme weather conditions). Any changes or updates needed in an ERP should be made as required by 310 CMR 2.04(13). For more information on emergency response planning, visit <https://www.mass.gov/lists/emergency-response-for-public-water-systems>

This graphic can be found in the Mass.gov library of social media products on water conservation at <https://www.mass.gov/doc/download-hydrant-flushing/download>



And this can be found at <https://www.mass.gov/doc/download-drought-increases-fire-danger-graphic/download>

