

GUIDANCE FOR PRIVATE WELL USERS

Some private wells run dry every summer, while others, which may be right next-door, flow without a problem even during a drought. Geographical or physical conditions of the soil or rock and well construction may cause these differences.

Groundwater levels all across Connecticut are low this year due to a very dry winter and spring. If weather trends persist we anticipate an increase in the number of private wells that will run dry this summer. This guidance has been prepared to help people cope with the situation.

Do I have a Problem?

If you hear your pump going on more frequently than normal or experience water outages, or if air bubbles come out of your faucet, your well may be having trouble keeping up with your demand for water.

Where is My Well?

Where is it? How deep is it? These are some basic questions. If you do not know the answers, call your local health department. The well driller who installed your well may also be a useful source of information. A metal detector may prove useful in tracing buried pipes to locate your well. New pipes are generally plastic, but iron is often used in the installation of wells.

Why Conserve Water?

Cutting back on water use by refraining from outdoor use or doing laundry and limiting toilet flushing and bathing can significantly reduce your demand for water. Timing water use to spread out your water demand over the entire day may also help.

How Do I Increase My Available Water?

A licensed plumber or well driller can inspect your well and may be able to lower the pump. This may increase the useable storage in the well and increase the extent of the aquifer from which the well can get water if the well is already deep.

Deepening your well is another possibility. Consult your local health department about the advisability of deepening your well and to obtain a list of licensed well drillers.

Increasing the amount of water storage through the installation of an atmospheric storage tank and/or transfer pump by a licensed plumber may help. Water in storage will be available for use as needed, for longer periods. This allows well water to flow into the well (recover) for a longer period of time before recharging the tank.

What Happens if I Run Out of Water?

If the groundwater level drops below the bottom of your well you are out of water. Deepening your well or drilling a new well may be a solution. If that is not feasible, it may be possible to connect a tank to your home and have water delivered by a bulk water hauler, although this may require the installation of an atmospheric storage tank and transfer pump. Your town health department may have information on local facilities for bathing, or filling containers for drinking water. Bulk water haulers are available but limited on their ability to deliver water.

What About Safety?

Any time work is done on your well, or you add water storage, or change delivery, your system should be disinfected to kill any bacteria that may have entered the system during the work procedure. A description of disinfection procedures is available from your local health department. Also private well owners should test their water annually for bacteria and other indicators, and whenever there is an evident change in quality contact your local health department for advice.

When Will Things Get Better?

This is largely governed by precipitation and is thus unpredictable. However, if conditions have not improved, relief can be expected normally around mid-October when evaporation and transpiration by plants declines. Following information provided by public water suppliers and your local health department can give a good indication of conditions.

Things to Remember

Do not fill your well from other water sources. The water will disperse into the aquifer. Your well is not a storage tank.

When in doubt, utilize local and state resources for information.