



# STATE OF CONNECTICUT

OFFICE OF POLICY AND MANAGEMENT  
Intergovernmental Policy and Planning Division

October 2, 2020

To: Governor Ned Lamont  
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From: OPM Acting Undersecretary Martin Heft

RE: **CT Water Planning Council Interagency Drought Work Group**  
**STAGE 3 - Moderate Drought**

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The Connecticut Water Planning Council's [Interagency Drought Work](#) (IDW) Group met yesterday and updated the drought status of several counties. Pursuant to the [Connecticut Drought Preparedness and Response Plan](#) (Drought Plan), Middlesex was added to the Stage 2 designation: Incipient Drought and Hartford, Tolland, Windham and New London were raised to Stage 3 designation: Moderate Drought. Stage 3 initiates additional state review of options for preparing for potentially more serious conditions in the future.

**Stage 3 - Moderate Drought**

Hartford, Tolland, Windham and New London County

**Stage 2 - Incipient Drought**

Litchfield and Middlesex

**Stage 1 - Below Normal Conditions**

Fairfield and New Haven

To avoid further stressing water supplies and to avoid other threats of the current drought, residents and businesses are being asked to voluntarily take the following measures:

For counties in Stages 2 and 3:

- Reduce outdoor irrigation of established lawns and limit other outdoor water uses.

- Avoid burning in or near woodlands or brushlands
- Report dry fire/irrigation ponds or private wells to local regional water coordinators or regional emergency management liaisons.
- Follow any additional conservation requests issued by water suppliers, municipalities and state agencies

For counties in Stage 1:

- Follow regular best practices for water conservation and wise water use (insert link to best practices)
- Be alert to the potential for worsening conditions and be prepared to follow state or local water conservation guidelines if issued

Under Stage 3, the Office of the Policy and Management will issue a press release declaring the changes and conduct the following communications:

- DEMHS through its regional emergency management coordinators will notify municipal CEOs and municipal water coordinators
- DPH will notify the public water suppliers
- Agencies will post information on websites and social media outlets

As Unified Command is already established for COVID-19, the Governor's Office should consider discussing the drought situation and asking key state agencies and ESF 12 water companies to review emergency plans and coordinate messaging. State agencies should be directed to enact water conservation measures and to review and update any specific drought/emergency plans.

We have also established a "Drought Action Team" to review possible actions to be taken by the state and make further recommendations as appropriate.

The IDW will continue to monitor conditions and evaluate any changes and determine any recommended actions at that time.

## Stage 2: Incipient Drought

### Defining Criteria:

A decision to issue a Stage 2 declaration regarding incipient drought is guided by the following drought criteria thresholds, as well as any other ancillary data:

|                               |   |
|-------------------------------|---|
| Precipitation                 | Two-month total below 65% of average                          |
| Groundwater                   | Two out of three months below the 25 <sup>th</sup> percentile |
| Streamflow                    | Two out of three months below the 25 <sup>th</sup> percentile |
| Reservoirs                    | Average levels less than 80% of normal                        |
| Palmer Drought Severity Index | -2.0 to -2.99   |
| Crop Moisture Index           | -1.0 to -1.99, abnormally dry                                 |
| VegDRI (seasonal)             | Pre-drought conditions  |
| Fire Danger                   | Moderate  |
| U.S. Drought Monitor          | Intensity level D1-D2   |

This stage was formerly called: Drought Advisory

### Stage 2 Recommended Mitigation Actions

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|--|---|--|
| <b>Coordination &amp; Management</b>   | <i>State Agencies coordinated through the IDW</i> | Alert municipal water coordinators and water suppliers of conditions.  |
|  |   | Coordinate with municipal water coordinators, local health directors, and water suppliers to promote water conservation, monitor local situations, and report problems.  |
|  |   | Offer technical assistance to water utilities experiencing problems to assist with system management and promotion of water conservation with specific measures tailored to each water utility. Assist water utilities in strengthening supply-side and demand-side conservation measures.   |
|  |   | Survey local Water Coordinators and assess municipal drought preparedness. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Advise municipalities to review appropriate ordinances to enable the enforcement of water conservation if needed in the future and to coordinate with water utilities, when pertinent.</li> <li>Advise water utilities to implement their coordination plans with their municipalities.</li> </ul> |
|  | <i>Municipalities / Local Officials</i>           | Water coordinator and water suppliers should review communications protocol and coordinate on any public announcements (this could involve multiple communities).  |
|  |   | Alert key town officials (police & fire chiefs, health director, chief executive officer, emergency management director, public works, parks & recreation, superintendent of schools) about conditions.<br>Notify municipal public works departments and fire responders to consider suspending all unnecessary exercises that require fire hydrants to be opened.   |
|  | <i>Water Suppliers</i>                            | Communicate with DPH and municipal water coordinators about local conditions, concerns, and any changes to the status of water supply.   |
| Consider postponing discretionary water consuming maintenance, repair work, and shutdowns. |   |  |

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| <b>Public Outreach &amp; Education</b>   | <i>State Agencies coordinated through the IDW</i> | Provide information to weather forecasters and other media to encourage public interest stories and facilitate dissemination of drought information to the public.   |
|  |   | Compile information on water conservation tips to homeowners, e.g., "Water Efficiency Measures for Residents," and "Water Efficiency Measures for Landscaping," in preparation for distribution through the Internet, public service announcements, and other timely mailings should the drought worsen. |
|  |   | Increase awareness of the state's drought information website.   |
|  | <i>Municipalities / Local Officials</i>           | Work with state agencies to prepare information on water conservation tips for future dissemination to water users through the Internet, newspapers, public service announcements, and other timely mailings.  |
| Issue guidance document for private well users who may require assistance with well repairs or enhancement and make this available via the Internet. |   |  |
|  | <i>Water Suppliers</i>                            | Consider issuing voluntary conservation appeals to all customers.  |
|  |   | Respond to customer complaints and problems related to drought conditions.   |
| <b>Data collection, monitoring, &amp; preparedness</b>   | <i>State Agencies coordinated through the IDW</i> | Continue to monitor the primary indicators of drought, increasing the frequency as needed. Include qualitative data. Prepare new assessment reports as conditions change.  |
|  |   | Review activities of neighboring states through websites, and in coordination with National Weather Service and USGS.  |
|  |   | Survey local health departments, well drillers, and the Department of Consumer Protection concerning well drilling activity related to dry conditions.   |
|  |   | Monitor WebEOC for activities related to dry conditions.   |
|  |   | Review and implement, as needed, the plan for managing potential forest fire hazards and threats.  |
|  |   | Review water supply systems that have historically had adequacy problems, "target systems," and provide technical assistance as needed.  |
|  |   | Review reservoir storage reports of the systems that use surface water supplies and consider more frequent reservoir level reporting for selected systems.   |
|  |   | Verify database accuracy of approved water haulers, approved bottled water purveyors, licensed well drillers, and upload lists to the state drought management website.  |
|  | <i>Municipalities / Local Officials</i>           | Water coordinator should review any local sources of data on wells, dry hydrants, fire conditions, etc., and communicate to the appropriate state agencies.  |
|  | <i>Water Suppliers</i>                            | Monitor local water supplies and collect data more frequently as needed.   |
|  |   | Begin preparing for the possibility of bringing alternative/secondary supply systems online.   |
| Investigate any deviation from normal use registered on production meters.   |   |  |
| Review water supply emergency contingency plan triggers and mitigation activities; update if necessary.  |   |  |

### Stage 3: Moderate Drought

#### Defining Criteria:

A decision to issue a Stage 3 declaration regarding moderate drought is guided by the following drought criteria thresholds, as well as any other ancillary data:

|                               |   |
|-------------------------------|---|
| Precipitation                 | Three-month total below 65% of average                        |
| Groundwater                   | Four consecutive months below the 25 <sup>th</sup> percentile |
| Streamflow                    | Four out of five months below the 25th percentile             |
| Reservoirs                    | Average levels less than 70% of normal                        |
| Palmer Drought Severity Index | -3.0 to -3.99   |
| Crop Moisture Index           | -2.0 to -2.99, excessively dry                                |
| VegDRI (seasonal)             | Moderate drought conditions                                   |
| Fire Danger                   | High  |
| U.S. Drought Monitor          | Intensity level D2-D3   |

This stage was formerly called: Drought Watch

#### Stage 3: Moderate Drought

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|---|---|--|
| <b>Coordination &amp; Management</b>  | <i>State Agencies coordinated through the IDW</i> | Declare a Stage 3 Drought and notify municipal water coordinators.   |
|   |   | Governor to consider convening Unified Command, including key state agencies and ESF 12 water companies, to review emergency plans and coordinate messaging. Consider establishing a Web EOC incident in order to track water issues.  |
|   |   | Contact each municipal Water Coordinator to ensure understanding of the required role and responsibilities of a municipal Water Coordinator.   |
|   |   | Commissioners require all state-owned facilities to enact water conservation measures and to review and update any specific drought/emergency plans.   |
|   |   | Communicate with the Army Corps of Engineers or other dam operators on possible use of impoundments for streamflow augmentation in locations where existing streamflow regulations are not adequately meeting the needs of fish and wildlife downstream.   |
|   |   | Initiate contact with federal agencies (FEMA/EPA/USGS/USDA/Corps) in order to identify federal assistance capabilities.  |
|   |   | Provide technical assistance to utilities on managing systems during dry conditions, including (a) administering expedited reviews of proposed system upgrades and alternative water supplies for drought impacted community water systems; and (b) assist in the identification of emergency connections. |
|   |   | Evaluate unused or underutilized high yield aquifers developable as temporary emergency water supplies including for non-potable uses.   |
| Disseminate generic press releases (DEMHS/OPM) and notification letters to water systems, local health directors, well drillers, etc. |   |  |
| Direct state agencies to conserve water and repair leaks at state facilities.   |   |  |

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|  | <i>Municipalities/<br/>Local Officials</i> | Municipal water supply coordinators should provide input to DPH on local conditions; for example, any change in status such as triggers identified in water supply plans or as defined by asset management plans, if any.  |
|  | <i>Water Suppliers</i>                     | Review operations to ensure that conservation efforts are maximized. Non-critical utility uses such as routine flushing, clearwell, clarifier or storage tank cleaning, meter testing and bleeders should be reviewed to eliminate, reduce or delay water use, where feasible. |
|  |  | Preparation for mandatory conservation, including necessary enforcement mechanisms, will be initiated.   |
|  |  | Determine where temporary interconnections between water utilities are needed and coordinate with DEEP/DPH for expedited permitting.   |