



# STATE OF CONNECTICUT

OFFICE OF POLICY AND MANAGEMENT

*Intergovernmental Policy and Planning Division*

August 13, 2020

To: Governor Ned Lamont  
OPM Secretary Melissa McCaw  
OPM Deputy Secretary Konstantinos Diamantis  
Jonathan Harris, Senior Advisor Office of the Governor  
Paul Mounds, Chief of Staff, Office of the Governor  
Josh Geballe, Chief Operating Officer, Office of the Governor  
Max Reiss, Communications Director, Office of the Governor  
Chris McClure, Strategic Research and Communications Advisor, OPM

From: OPM Acting Undersecretary Martin Heft

RE: **CT Water Planning Council Interagency Drought Work Group  
UPDATE - STAGE 1 - BELOW NORMAL CONDITIONS**

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The Connecticut Water Planning Council's [Interagency Drought Work](#) (IDW) Group has been meeting regularly since we informed you that the State of Connecticut was at Stage 1 - Below Normal Conditions on [June 16, 2020](#). We continue to review conditions under the [Connecticut Drought Preparedness and Response Plan](#) (Drought Plan) and, while we remain at Stage 1, we want to advise you of recent deterioration and of the potential for upcoming actions.

The Drought Plan identifies five stages of increasingly dry conditions:

- [Stage 1](#): Below Normal Conditions
- [Stage 2](#): Incipient Drought (formerly Drought Advisory)
- [Stage 3](#): Moderate Drought (formerly Drought Watch)
- [Stage 4](#): Severe Drought (formerly Drought Warning)
- [Stage 5](#): Extreme Drought (formerly Drought Emergency)

Conditions are deteriorating rapidly in Connecticut's eastern counties, which until recent weeks was less affected than other parts of the state. In western parts of the state, however, conditions have improved somewhat, particularly in Fairfield County and neighboring areas.

Current impacts include agricultural stress, depleted fire ponds, low streamflow, and elevated wildfire activity. Some residents that rely on shallow wells for potable water may also be impacted. Public water supplies remain stable statewide, except for a few systems that are the most sensitive to drought.

**All of Connecticut remains at Stage 1, but the IDW may soon recommend declaring Stage 2 for some or all of the state if conditions continue to worsen.** At Stage 2, the following communication and outreach activities would occur:

- OTG (or other executive branch agency, if delegated by OTG) provides public notice, with messaging provided by the IDW.
- The state's regional emergency management coordinators notify municipal CEOs and municipal water coordinators
- Department of Public Health notifies public water suppliers

A full list of recommended mitigation actions for Stage 2 are included as an attachment to this letter.

We will continue the effort to identify municipal water coordinators for each of our 169 municipalities and are receiving reports from State Departments of Agriculture, Public Health, Energy and Environmental Protection, and Emergency Services and Public Protection. We are also receiving technical assistance from the National Weather Service and the United States Geological Survey.

The IDW will meet again on Thursday, August 20<sup>th</sup> to monitor these conditions and provide any recommended actions on moving to *Stage 2 Incipient Drought*.

## 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

Stage 2 Recommended Mitigation Actions		
Coordination & Management	State Agencies coordinated through the IDW	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>
	Municipalities / Local Officials	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.
		Notify municipal public works departments and fire responders to consider suspending all unnecessary exercises that require fire hydrants to be opened.
	Water Suppliers	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.		
Public Outreach & Education	State Agencies coordinated through the IDW	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.
	Municipalities / Local Officials	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.
	Water Suppliers	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
		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.