



STATE OF CONNECTICUT

OFFICE OF POLICY AND MANAGEMENT

CONNECTICUT INTERAGENCY DROUGHT WORKGROUP: FOUR COUNTIES MOVE TO STAGE 3 DROUGHT CONDITIONS, ONE COUNTY ENTERS STAGE 2 CONDITIONS

(Hartford) – The Connecticut Interagency Drought Workgroup has increased the drought status for four counties to Stage 3 and one county has entered Stage 2. Even as September ended with heavy rain in most of the state, drought has continued to intensify over much of Connecticut. In particular, significant portions of Hartford, New London, Tolland, and Windham counties are now experiencing conditions consistent with a Stage 3 or “Moderate” drought. The highest drought stage, as specified by the Connecticut Drought Preparedness and Response Plan, is Stage 5.

Stage 3 is comparable to the highest intensity of drought Connecticut experienced during 2016-2017. Conditions can vary locally, inside and outside the Stage 3 area and preparations are beginning for the possibility of targeted emergency response should conditions continue to worsen. The Interagency Drought Workgroup has also determined that conditions in Middlesex County are consistent with Stage 2 drought, which is an emerging drought event potentially impacting water supplies, agriculture, or natural ecosystems. Litchfield County remains at Stage 2 and Fairfield and New Haven Counties remain at Stage 1.

Reports of low water levels in private wells, streams, agricultural water supplies, and fire suppression ponds have been increasing especially in eastern Connecticut. Due to the unusually dry soils, the rain that does fall does not soak into the ground and the threat of fire returns soon after the rain ends. Residents are reminded to monitor daily forest fire danger reports and plan outdoor burning accordingly, especially in areas dependent on fire ponds that might not be usable.

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

For counties at Stage 3:

- End irrigation of established lawns and limit other outdoor water uses;
- Residents and businesses dependent upon private wells should limit water use to only essential needs to reduce the chance of well depletion ([see guidance for private well users](#));

- Prepare for using alternative water sources in the event wells, farm ponds, fire suppression supplies, or other critical water sources become depleted; and
- Avoid burning in or near woodlands or brushlands, and obey any municipal or state orders for outdoor burning bans

For counties at Stage 2 or above:

- Reduce outdoor irrigation and other non-essential outdoor uses of water;
- Postpone the planting of any new lawns or vegetation (if new plantings cannot be postponed, consider drought-tolerant species); and
- Minimize overall water use by fixing leaky plumbing and fixtures

For all counties:

- Follow [best practices](#) for water conservation and wise water use; and
- Be alert to the potential for worsening conditions and follow conservation requests or mandates issued by public water systems, municipalities, or state agencies

A Stage 2 drought was previously [announced](#) for Litchfield, Hartford, Tolland, and Windham counties on August 26 and was [announced](#) for New London County on September 21. Stage 3 initiates additional state review of options for preparing for potentially more serious conditions in the future.

The Interagency Drought Workgroup consists of representatives from the Department of Agriculture, Department of Emergency Services and Public Protection, Department of Energy and Environmental Protection, Department of Public Health, Office of Policy and Management, and Public Utilities Regulatory Authority, with assistance from the National Weather Service and United States Geological Survey. More information on the Interagency Drought Workgroup and the State Drought Plan are available at www.ct.gov/waterstatus.

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