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Abbreviations

DAS – Department of Administrative Services
DCP – Department of Consumer Protection
DEEP – Department of Energy and Environmental Protection
DEMHS – Division of Emergency Management and Homeland Security
DoAg – Department of Agriculture
DPH – Department of Public Health
IDW – Interagency Drought Workgroup
NOAA/NIDIS – National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration / National Integrated Drought Information System
NWS – National Weather Service
OPM – Office of Policy and Management



Connecticut Interagency Drought Workgroup 2025 Drought After-Action Report & Improvement Plan

OTG – Office of the Governor
PURA – Public Utilities Regulatory Authority
USDM – United States Drought Monitor
USGS – United States Geological Survey
WPC – Water Planning Council

The 2025 Drought After Action Report was compiled and authored by Rebecca Dahl, State Drought Coordinator and Planning Analyst at OPM

2025 Drought – Context & Overview

The 2025 Drought began in September 2025 and concluded in January 2026, taking place in Fairfield, Middlesex, and New Haven counties. This drought event was characteristic of a rapid-onset drought (“flash drought”) due to a growing precipitation deficit in southern Connecticut, which led to an intensification of drought conditions. The drought criteria of concern included groundwater levels, streamflow levels, precipitation, reservoir levels, and fire danger levels.

A Stage 2 Drought Advisory was officially declared for Fairfield, Middlesex, and New Haven counties in October 2025 and remained in effect until January 2026, when the IDW recommended the removal of all drought stages.

Though not as severe, the 2025 Drought was reminiscent of the 2024-25 Drought, as dry conditions were rapidly spurred on during early fall following a period of more intense precipitation in the summer months. The occurrence of an autumnal “dry season” is becoming more prevalent for Connecticut as evidenced by the increasing fire danger levels during October and November, in both 2024 and 2025. These repetitive flash drought events underscore the importance of consistent drought monitoring and management and emphasize the need for a more dynamic and responsive State Drought Plan.

2025 Drought: After-Action Review – Findings

Please note that those items with an asterisk () were previously discussed in the 2024-25 Drought After Action Report and are appearing again due to their continued relevance.*

Improvements Following the 2025 Drought

- **Communications and Documentation:** With the occurrence of three drought events (2022, 2024-25, 2025) over three years, communications among state agencies continue to improve, due to the increased opportunities for relationship building among agency staff. During the 2025 Drought, there was an increase in discussion among agency staff regarding the dissemination of communications to stakeholders. Additionally, the documentation of previous drought events has been beneficial towards progressing recurring conversation topics.

Challenges and Opportunities Identified Following the 2025 Drought

- **Reliance on Federal Data Sources:** Though a relatively infrequent circumstance, the impact of the federal government shutdown must be considered when reviewing the challenges of this drought. The lack of data on groundwater and streamflow levels for a portion of this drought event made decision-making difficult for the IDW during this period and further hinders the review and reflection of this drought event. This occurrence highlights an opportunity to pursue further state investment in reducing data gaps and developing infrastructure for data monitoring to enhance the work of our federal partners.
- **Difficulties Moving Through Drought Stages*:** A consistent challenge with the implementation of the State Drought Plan is the movement out of drought stages as conditions improve. The challenge occurs for two reasons: (a) there are no prescribed mechanisms for movement out of drought states within the State Drought Plan and (b) the defining criteria for moving into a drought stage and/or advancing a drought stage are dependent on long-term trends, which makes it difficult to develop a clear inverse measure for reducing drought. This was previously noted in the 2022 and 2024-25 Drought After Action Reports and remains an issue to be resolved.
- **Stage 1 Drought Declaration*:** Adding to the difficulties of moving through drought stages is the role of the Stage 1 Drought Advisory in the State Drought Plan. Per the State Drought Plan: *Stage 1 is a preliminary preparedness stage intended to advise*

state, regional, and local officials, and public water suppliers of potentially worsening drought conditions and to reestablish lines of communication. This stage was developed at a time when the IDW was not meeting on a regular basis and there was no State Drought Coordinator regularly monitoring conditions. With these improvements in coordination, there is no need to “reestablish lines of communication” nor are there many recommended mitigation actions that would take place because of this declaration, that are not already occurring. Additionally, Stage 1 is not a public-facing stage, which creates confusion from a public messaging perspective and provides little additional benefit in providing drought awareness. As a result, the IDW has questioned the utility of Stage 1 and difficulties with the outmoded nature of this stage is a topic of frequent discussion. Further examination and discussion on this topic are warranted, as previously noted in the 2024-25 Drought After-Action Report.

- **Rapid-Onset “Flash” Drought*:** Defined by NOAA/NIDIS, flash drought is the rapid intensification and onset of drought. The term was coined in the early 2000s, and research is ongoing to better define, identify, monitor, and predict flash drought. Generally speaking, flash drought occurs due to a combination of meteorological factors including lower-than-normal rates of precipitation, higher temperatures, high winds, and increased evapotranspiration. The State Drought Plan does not adequately account for instances of flash drought, as the defining criteria per drought stage is based on traditional, long-term drought patterns and requires months of accumulated data sets. As demonstrated by this flash drought event, conditions can change in a manner that outpaces the progression of long-term drought and leaves the IDW and state agencies behind in making drought declarations or accommodations. The role of flash drought in the State Drought Plan warrants further discussion, especially as this was identified as an emerging challenge in the 2022 Drought After Action Report and highlighted for discussion in the 2024-25 Drought After Action Report.

Next Steps – State Drought Plan Recommendations

The IDW intends to review the State Drought Plan and begin making recommendations for updates in 2026. It is highly recommended that these efforts continue and that the recommendations from the 2022 and 2024-25 Drought After Action Reports are underscored.

2025 Drought Timeline Actions

- **October 2, 2025**
 - IDW Regular Meeting
 - IDW advises Stage 2 designation for Fairfield, Middlesex and New Haven counties
 - [10/3/2025 Advisory Memo](#)

- **October 7, 2025**
 - Governor declares Stage 2 designation for Fairfield, Middlesex and New Haven counties
 - [10/7/2025 OTG Press Release](#)

- **November 6, 2025**
 - IDW Regular Meeting

- **December 4, 2025**
 - IDW Regular Meeting

- **January 14, 2026**
 - IDW Regular Meeting
 - IDW advises removal of drought designation for Fairfield, Middlesex, and New Haven counties
 - [1/14/2026 IDW Advisory Memo](#)

2025 Drought Meeting Minutes & Reports Matrix

Highest Stage	Extent	Date	Minutes	Drought Conditions Report	Highlights
None	Statewide	9/4/2025	Minutes	July 2025 & August 2025 Drought Conditions Report	No drought stage was recommended. Noted trends towards drier conditions in lower four counties of the state. Discussion on utility of Stage 1 in the State Drought Plan.
2	Fairfield, Middlesex, and New Haven counties	10/2/2025	Minutes	September 2025 Drought Conditions Report	Recommended to move to Stage 2 designation for Fairfield, Middlesex, and New Haven Counties. Noted that this fall drought is following a similar trend to the onset of 2024's drought event.
2	Fairfield, Middlesex, and New Haven counties	11/6/2025	Minutes	October 2025 Drought Conditions Report	Limited groundwater and streamflow data from USGS due to Federal government shutdown. Some relief due to more significant precipitation event at end of October.
2	Fairfield, Middlesex, and New Haven counties	12/4/2025	Minutes	November 2025 Drought Conditions Report	Improving conditions despite lower precipitation than average in November. Some drought triggers are still being met.
None	Statewide	1/14/2026	Minutes	December 2025 Drought Conditions Report	Improvements in reservoir data and precipitation. Decision to remove all drought stages.



FW: Stage 2 Drought Advisory for Fairfield, Middlesex, and New Haven Counties

From Fahnestock, Melissa <Melissa.Fahnestock@ct.gov>

Date Thu 10/23/2025 8:06 AM

To Dahl, Rebecca <Rebecca.Dahl@ct.gov>

Hi Becca,

Please see below email we sent to Consumptive Water Diversion Permit holders who have drought conditions in their permit. I apologize; I should have cc'd you on this as well. I'll do that in the future.

Let me know if you have any questions.

Thanks!
Melissa F

Melissa Fahnestock (she/her)

Environmental Analyst II

Water Quantity Unit

Water Planning and Management Division

Bureau of Water Protection and Land Reuse

Connecticut Department of Energy & Environmental Protection

79 Elm Street, Hartford, CT 06106-5127

p: 860.424.3785 | Melissa.Fahnestock@ct.gov



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portal.ct.gov/DEEP

From: DEEP WaterDiversiion <DEEP.WaterDiversiion@ct.gov>

Sent: Wednesday, October 8, 2025 3:22 PM

To: DEEP WaterDiversiion <DEEP.WaterDiversiion@ct.gov>

Cc: Czapla, Kim <Kim.Czapla@ct.gov>; Mostowy, Melissa <Melissa.Mostowy@ct.gov>; Hibbard, Alexandria <Alexandria.Hibbard@ct.gov>

Subject: Stage 2 Drought Advisory for Fairfield, Middlesex, and New Haven Counties





Connecticut Department of Energy and Environmental Protection

Water Diversion Permit and Registration

On October 7th, Governor Ned Lamont announced that he is declaring a [Stage 2 Drought](#) for Fairfield, Middlesex, and New Haven Counties in Connecticut due to below normal precipitation levels in these regions.

You are receiving this message because you are an active diversion permittee with a Drought Management Plan condition addressed in your permit. Below is an example of typical Drought Management Plan condition language that your permit may contain:

Upon declaration of a particular drought stage as described in "Connecticut Drought Preparedness and Response Plan (September 6, 2022 or as amended)", the permittee shall limit the authorized withdrawal maximum as follows:

- *Stage 1: Below Normal Conditions: 0% reduction of permitted maximum withdrawal*
- **Stage 2: Incipient Drought: 10% reduction of permitted maximum withdrawal**
- *Stage 3: Moderate Drought: 15% reduction of permitted maximum withdrawal*
- *Stage 4: Severe Drought: 20% reduction of permitted maximum withdrawal*
- *Stage 5: Extreme Drought: 25% reduction of permitted maximum withdrawal*

Please note that your Drought Management Plan may also refer to an attachment contained within your permit document.

Given the current conditions of the drought notice, you are expected to adhere to the Drought Management Plan conditions of your permit as applicable. For more information, please visit the Connecticut Drought Information Center: [Drought Home \(ct.gov\)](#)

If you have any questions, please contact us at DEEP.WaterDiversion@ct.gov, or by phone (860)-424-4192.

If you need to update the contact information for a Consumptive Water Diversion Permit, please contact us at DEEP.WaterDiversion@ct.gov.

2/2/26, 12:27 PM

FW: Stage 2 Drought Advisory for Fairfield, Middlesex, and New Haven Counties - Dahl, Rebecca - Outlook

Department of Energy and Environmental Protection

79 Elm Street

Hartford CT 06106-5127

Phone Number: 860-424-3000



Weather

Dry Conditions Remain In CT; Workgroup Concerned Shutdown Will Affect Drought Data Access



by **Viktoria Sundqvist**

October 3, 2025, 11:12 am



Despite some rain at the end of September, most of Connecticut remains abnormally dry, and average rainfall for most of the state remains well below average. Heading into October, however, officials may have a harder time tracking drought conditions due to lack of federal data because of the government shutdown.

New Haven, Middlesex and Fairfield counties are of greatest concern – with the Bridgeport region in particular seeing a rain deficit of about 8 inches – and **the state’s Interagency Drought Workgroup** on Thursday voted to recommend that Gov. Ned Lamont move those counties into a Stage 2 drought advisory.

A Stage 2 advisory – which all of Connecticut was under from November 2024 until early June of this year – means more alertness and awareness, as well as starting to prepare any potential mitigation to avoid moving into the next stage, officials said.

“But there’s no water restrictions, etc.,” said Martin Heft, who works for the Office of Policy and Management and chairs the drought workgroup. “Just recommendations.”

Connecticut officials use data from the National Weather Service, the US Geological Survey, the US Department of Agriculture, the US Drought Monitor, and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration to help assess local conditions. Due to the current federal government shutdown, however, state officials appeared to think that the federal data will not be updated and it will be harder for them to obtain accurate weather and drought information.

“I want to give a shoutout to our federal partners while they go through some things right now,” said State Drought Coordinator Becca Dahl during the workgroup meeting. “They were giving us the data promptly (for September) before they had to be out of office.”



Water levels were low at Lake Chamberlain reservoir in Bethany in September 2025. Credit: Viktoria Sundqvist / CTNewsJunkie

The report Dahl compiled for the monthly meeting notes that data and maps on groundwater levels in Connecticut, usually obtained via the USGS, is not up to date due to the government shutdown and timing of the end-of-the-month report. The government websites all carry notes that data will not be updated during the shutdown, except in cases of immediate public safety.

As of the end of September, about 92.4% of Connecticut was in the abnormally dry category, with moderate drought in 7.6% of the state, Dahl told the interagency group.

“We have gotten some participation, but are still generally dry,” she said. “We are not expecting any significant rain in the next week or so.”

Reservoir levels are generally trending down, and a couple are close to 80% of normal, Dahl said. If they drop below 80%, that would trigger a Stage 2 drought.

Many wells are also below normal, with Middlesex County reporting all wells below normal.

A map showing the vegetation drought response for Connecticut shows the southwest and south-central portions of the state in pre-drought stress.

Rainfall data shows Fairfield County at 2.87 inches for September, which is 62% of normal levels. For Hartford, the rainfall was at 3.62 inches, or 80% of normal levels; Litchfield County was at 3.21 inches, which is 68% of normal; Middlesex 2.79 at 60% of normal; New Haven 2.88 at 64% of normal; New London at 3.4 and 76% of normal; Tolland at 3.76 and 86% of normal and Windham at 3.92 and 94% of normal.

Because of the dry conditions, the fire danger also remains high throughout the state, officials noted.

But one drought workgroup member remained optimistic while looking at the weather forecast.

“Approximately 6 days from now... it looks like 1-2 inches of rainfall is possible,” said Douglas Glowacki, an emergency management program specialist. “There’s no guarantees, but... it does look like a significant event.”

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Parts of CT remain in 'emerging drought' status. Here's what it means

Connecticut Public Radio | By [Chris Polansky](#)

Published October 17, 2025 at 2:56 PM EDT



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Tyler Russell / Connecticut Public

FILE: "We are seeing the combined impacts of dry weather conditions and increased summer water usage. Connecticut Water currently has an adequate supply to meet our customers' needs, but we're asking customers in specific areas to voluntarily reduce water usage to prolong available water supplies and ensure we continue to have enough water for public health, hygiene, and fire protection," Connecticut Water President Craig Patla said in a statement.

Despite some recent rain, parts of Connecticut remain in a stage of "emerging

Connecticut Public Radio / WN...
The Colin McEnroe Show

“We are currently, per our [state drought plan](#), under stage two drought in Fairfield, New Haven, and Middlesex counties, and we are just seeing dry conditions throughout the state as well,” said Becca Dahl.

Stage two drought is the “first public-facing stage of our state drought plan,” Dahl said.

“It’s really just to provide an awareness of dry conditions at this time, to make the public aware, and to begin putting municipalities – just making them aware of the situation,” she said.

While residents are not required to take any mandatory actions at this stage of drought, Dahl encourages residents of the three counties to help “minimize drought impacts, including shutting down automatic outdoor water systems.”

That includes lawn sprinklers.

“We also encourage residents to look out for and follow any conservation requests either from their municipalities or their local water suppliers,” Dahl said.

Connecticut Water has issued voluntary conservation requests to customers in several towns, including Clinton, Madison, Guilford, Old Saybrook, Westbrook and Plymouth.

“We are seeing the combined impacts of dry weather conditions and increased summer water usage. Connecticut Water currently has an adequate supply to meet our customers’ needs, but we’re asking customers in specific areas to voluntarily reduce water usage to prolong available water supplies and ensure we continue to have enough water for public health, hygiene, and fire protection,” Connecticut Water President Craig Patla said in a statement.

The implementation of a stage two drought advisory came via a recommendation to the governor’s office from the state’s [Interagency Drought Workgroup](#).

“The purpose of increasing these counties to Stage 2 is to raise awareness that

Dahl, the state drought coordinator, said climate change is increasing the frequency of both drought and flood events.

“One of the things that we are seeing a little bit more with climate change is the occurrence of what is sometimes referred to as rapid-onset or ‘flash drought,’” Dahl said.

“You may remember last August we got some significant flooding in the Naugatuck Valley region and then, following that, September and October, we had two of the driest months on record,” she said. “So we're seeing that kind of switch back and forth start to occur more regularly.”

Connecticut last experienced the current level of drought in November 2024, when all eight counties experienced stage two drought.

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Chris Polansky

Chris Polansky joined Connecticut Public in March 2023 as a general

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reporter; Lehigh Valley Public Media in Bethlehem, Pa., as an anchor and producer for All Things Considered; and at Public Radio Tulsa in Tulsa, Okla., where he both reported and hosted Morning Edition.

[See stories by Chris Polansky](#)

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