



PRESS RELEASE: Drought Conditions Worsen in Several Regions Across Massachusetts

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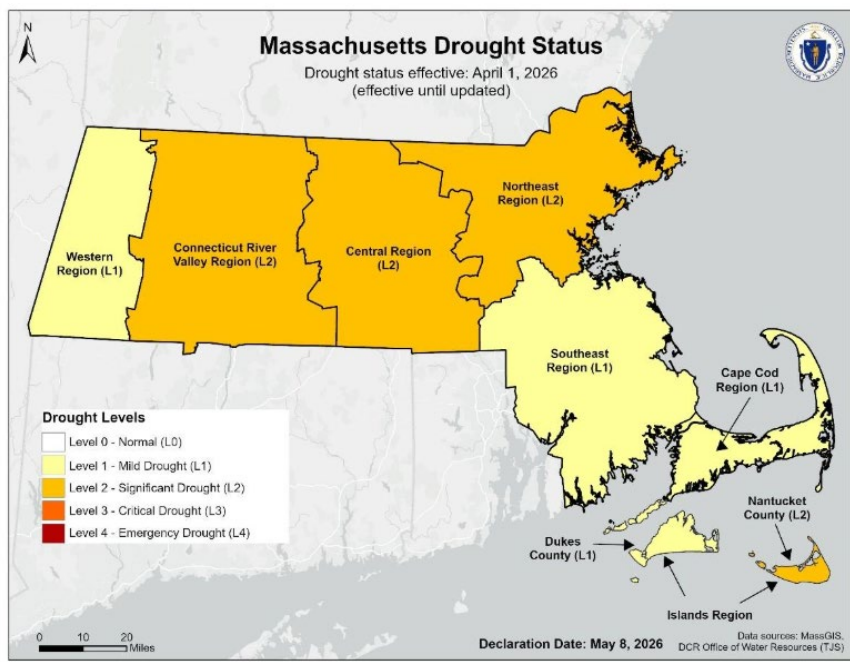
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Cape Cod shows early signs of improvement, while most regions continue to experience below-normal precipitation and declining streamflow



BOSTON – Today, Energy and Environmental Affairs (EEA) Secretary Rebecca Tepper declared worsened drought conditions in several regions of Massachusetts. The Connecticut River Valley, Central, and Northeast Regions and Nantucket County are now in a Level 2 - Significant Drought. The Western and Southeast Regions and Dukes County have moved to a Level 1 - Mild Drought. Conditions have slightly improved in the Cape, which is now a Level 1 - Mild Drought.

Drought designations reflect long-term trends. The Drought Management Task Force (DMTF) evaluates conditions over many months, and this declaration is based on data collected from August 2024 through April 2026.

During April, precipitation was well below normal in Massachusetts. The state's monthly totals ranged from 1.5 to 3 inches. The greatest deficits occurred across Martha's Vineyard and Nantucket, where only 0.75 to 1 inch of rainfall was observed – equating to departures of 3 to 4.5 inches below normal. Over the past 3 to 6 months, most of the state has received only 60 to 90 percent of normal precipitation. Nantucket continues to experience the most significant deficits, with totals near 50 percent of normal over both time periods. As a result, in spite of temporary relief from snowmelt in March, recent rainfall across the state has not been enough to make up for the longer-term precipitation and groundwater deficits that have built up over the past two years. While conditions may appear improved in the short term, key indicators such as groundwater take longer to recover and continue to reflect these deficits.

“Recent rainfall has helped, but rivers are still running low and groundwater levels remain below normal,” said **Secretary Tepper**. “These conditions reflect the longer-term dry period we’ve been experiencing. As we move through the growing season, many communities have water restrictions in place. Using water wisely, both outdoors and indoors, can help reduce stress on our water systems. These small actions add up and will help protect water supplies and lower the risk of impacts, including increased fire danger, later this summer.”

Although recent precipitation and snowmelt have led to some localized improvements, the overall system remains below normal. The current drought, which began in 2024, continues to affect the natural environment like streamflow, vernal pools and ponds and dependent species, fish migrations and declining groundwater. The drought is also drying out vegetation and ground cover. While local water supplies are currently stable, the persistence of drought conditions, combined with the start of growing season and increased water demand, makes continued conservation even more important. Outdoor watering restrictions help to ensure that adequate water supplies will continue to be available for essential uses such as drinking, washing, fire protection, and businesses, even as drought conditions persist.

As outlined in the [Massachusetts Drought Management Plan](#), continued detailed monitoring of drought conditions must continue. The drought levels also require ongoing coordination among state and federal agencies to implement drought response actions such as water-use restrictions. Additionally, engagement with municipalities, including local Boards of Health (BOH), is essential. This includes providing technical outreach and assistance to water suppliers and affected municipalities. Residents are asked to report to their local BOH if wells are drying up; BOHs are asked to report [here](#) on the condition of local private wells.

Residents can report dry environmental conditions and submit photos to help monitor the situation on the [Massachusetts Water Impact Reporter \(here\)](#). Additionally, a [FAQ](#) is available for questions regarding the current drought status and water conservation; and private well owners can go [here](#) for information on how the drought may impact them.

The Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection (MassDEP) will continue to assist communities in managing their water systems. The Massachusetts Water Resources Authority (MWRA) water supply system is not experiencing drought conditions, as defined within its individual plan. However, private well users and other sources of water within the same river basins are impacted by drought conditions. All sources of water, regardless of their location or type of withdrawal, ultimately draw from the same river basin. It is important for all users to do their part to conserve

water. Please note that even during a drought, to continue operational activities such as flushing and spring maintenance, water suppliers may need to use higher volumes of water.

Below are recommendations for communities and individuals living and working within a Level 1–Mild Drought and Level 2–Significant Drought Regions including those utilizing a private well. Residents and businesses are strongly urged to check with their local water system in case more stringent water [restrictions](#) are in place. Many systems may have other more severe local conditions and constraints on water supply.

For Regions in Level 2 – Significant Drought

Residents and Businesses:

- Minimize overall water use;
- Follow local water use restrictions;
- For any upcoming outdoor water use, limit watering to hand-held hoses or watering cans, to be used only after 5 p.m. or before 9 a.m.;
- Fix indoor leaks, such as from toilets, faucets, and showers, which result in more than 60 percent of indoor use; and,
- For larger buildings and businesses, conduct water audits to identify areas of leaks and potential water conservation opportunities.

Immediate Steps for Local Governments:

- Limit or prohibit installation of new sod, seeding, and/or landscaping; watering during or within 48 hours after measurable rainfall; washing of hard surfaces (sidewalks, patios, driveways, siding); personal vehicle or boat washing; and,
- Establish water-use reduction targets for all water users, identify top water users and conduct targeted outreach to help curb their use.

Short- and Medium-Term Steps for Local Governments:

- Establish a year-round water conservation program that includes public education and communication, taking advantage of the states [library of outreach materials](#);
- Provide timely information to local residents and businesses;
- Implement or establish drought surcharge or seasonal water rates;
- Check emergency inter-connections for water supply; and,
- Develop or refine your local drought management plan using guidance outlined in the state [Drought Management Plan](#).

For Regions in Level 1 – Mild Drought

Residents and Businesses:

- Minimize overall water use;
- Consider installing a rain barrel to collect rainwater for lawn and garden watering;
- For any upcoming outdoor water use, limit watering to one day a week (only from 5:00 pm – 9:00 am), or less frequently if required by your water supplier;
- Plant only local and drought-resistant species;
- Minimize lawn sizes; and,
- For larger buildings and businesses, conduct water audits to identify areas of leaks and potential water conservation opportunities.

Local Governments:

- Limit or prohibit installation of new sod, seeding, and/or landscaping; watering during or within 48 hours after measurable rainfall; washing of hard surfaces (sidewalks, patios, driveways, siding); personal vehicle or boat washing; filling of swimming pools, hot tubs;
- Establish a year-round water conservation program that includes public education and communication, taking advantage of the state's [library of outreach materials](#);

- Provide timely drought and water conservation information to residents and businesses;
- Check emergency inter-connections for water supply; and,
- Develop a local drought management plan (learn more [here](#)).

State agencies will continue to closely monitor and assess conditions across the state, coordinate any needed dissemination of information to the public, and help federal, state, and local agencies prepare additional responses that may be needed in the future. The DMTF will [meet](#) again on June 8 at 11:00 AM. For further information on water conservation and what residents can do, visit the EEA's [drought](#) and [water conservation](#) pages.