



TOWN OF UXBRIDGE
DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WORKS

147 HECLA STREET
UXBRIDGE, MASSACHUSETTS 01569-1326
508-278-8616 ♦ Fax 508-278-3179

Benn S. Sherman, P.E.
Director

NOTICE

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Contact: Water Division
508-278-8631

Subject: FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: Drought Conditions Remain Unchanged Throughout Commonwealth



Commonwealth of Massachusetts
Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs
Governor Charles D. Baker
Lt. Governor Karyn E. Polito
Secretary Matthew A. Beaton

Press Release Contact: Katie Gronendyke — 617-626-1129 or katie.gronendyke@state.ma.us

Drought Conditions Remain Unchanged Throughout Commonwealth *Monitoring of Water Resources to Continue, Indoor Water Conservation by Public Necessary*

BOSTON – December 9, 2016 – Although many areas of the state experienced some precipitation in November, large portions of the state continue to experience a water deficit. As a result, Energy and Environmental Affairs (EEA) Secretary Matthew Beaton today declared the following drought levels throughout the Commonwealth: a Drought Warning for the Connecticut River Valley, Western, Central, Northeast, and Southeast Massachusetts, unchanged from the month of November; and a Drought Advisory for the Cape and Islands, unchanged from the month of November. The declaration was the result of a recommendation issued from a recent meeting of the [Drought Management Task Force](#), comprised of state, federal and local officials, and will remain in effect until water levels return to normal in the affected regions.

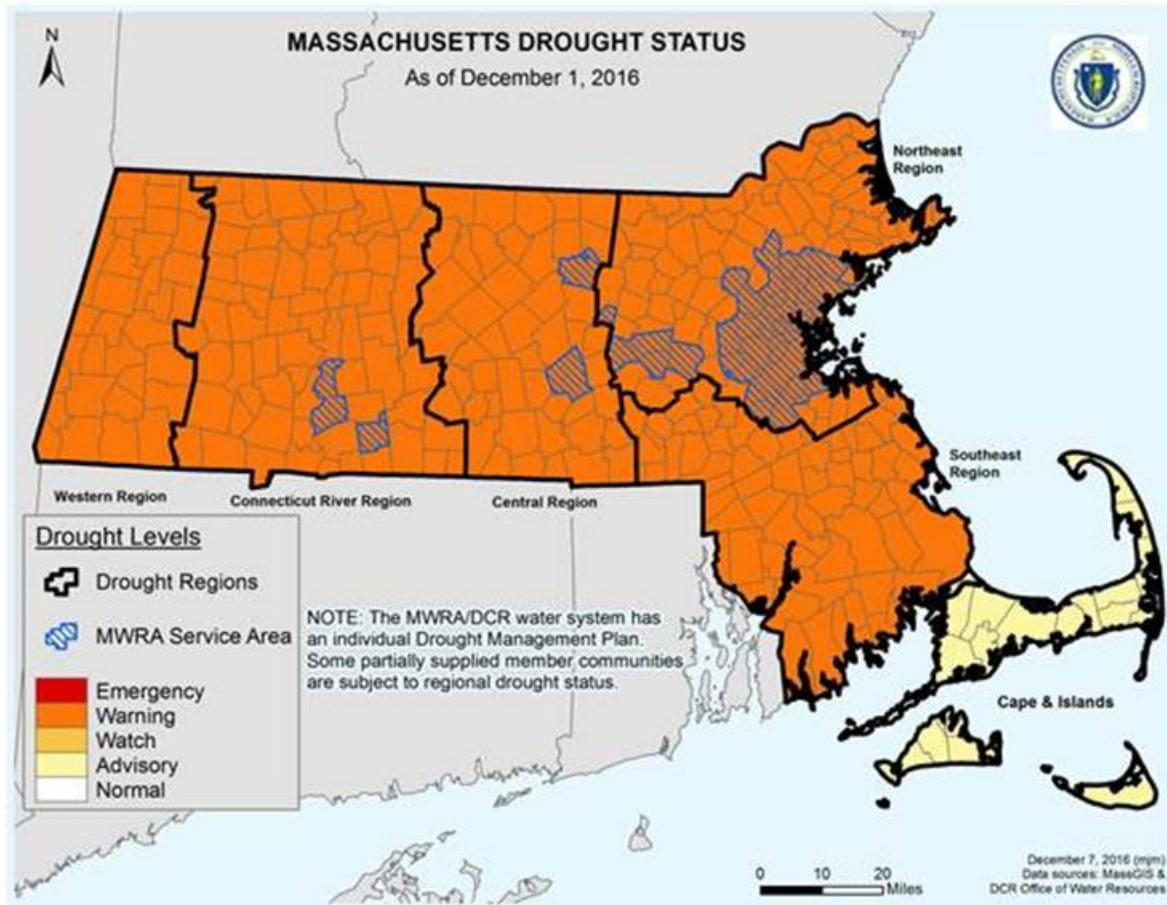
“It is incredibly important that as the Commonwealth transitions from fall to the winter months that we all focus on indoor water conservation methods, now that the outdoor watering season has come to an end,” **said Energy and Environmental Affairs Secretary Matthew Beaton**. “The Baker-Polito Administration urges the public to reduce indoor water usage, fix any indoor leaks, and conduct water audits.”

“While the state has received beneficial rainfall over the last few weeks, totals for the month of November were below normal and serious drought conditions remain across the state,” **said Massachusetts Emergency Management Agency (MEMA) Director Kurt Schwartz**. “The public is urged to continue conserving water in order to reduce the overall demand on our water sources.”

A Drought Warning, as outlined in the [Massachusetts Drought Management Plan](#), indicates over six consecutive months of groundwater and stream flow levels being below normal, and larger reservoirs at below normal levels. This initiates a much more concerted set of government responses including instating water restrictions, and more intensified monitoring and coordination between the agencies. Areas within the Drought Warning regions are currently experiencing precipitation levels below normal



for six out of seven consecutive months. The declaration of a Drought Advisory indicates a level of dry conditions that warrants closer tracking by government agencies.



The state continues to intensely monitor and assess the drought situation, and any associated environmental and agricultural impacts. Furthermore, the state asks the public to be mindful of the amount of water they are using, and to reduce indoor water use, address leaks as soon as possible, and for larger buildings and businesses to conduct water audits to ensure they identify areas of leaks and potential water conservation. All these steps will greatly help reduce water use to ensure essential needs such as drinking water and fire protection are being met, habitats have enough water to recover, and to stretch our water supplies into the spring.

The Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection's (MassDEP) permits exempt certain water uses from mandatory restrictions, including: for health or safety reasons; the production of food and fiber; the maintenance of livestock; and to meet the core functions of a business. MassDEP continues to provide technical assistance to communities on managing systems, including assistance on use of emergency connections and water supplies, as well as assisting towns on how to request a declaration of drought emergency.



“Despite recent rain events, the Commonwealth is still in a significant drought, so people should continue to use water wisely,” **said Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection Commissioner Martin Suuberg**. “Residents should all look to efforts within the home to conserve water. Fixing leaky faucets, toilets and showerheads is a great way to conserve water and save money.”

To aid farmers and other small businesses, the Baker-Polito Administration launched the [Massachusetts Drought Emergency Loan Fund](#), and continues to work closely with the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), Farm Service Agency. As a result of USDA primary agricultural [disaster designations](#) due to losses caused by drought, all Massachusetts counties are now eligible for federal emergency loans through the Farm Service Agency to help recover from crop losses. Additionally, all Massachusetts counties are eligible for federal emergency loans as a result of a USDA primary agricultural [disaster designation](#) due to crop losses of tree fruits like peaches that were caused by frost and freeze occurring between February and May.

“As year-end approaches, farmers are pleased with the more frequent recent precipitation, but need much more of the same prior to the 2017 growing season,” **said Department of Agricultural Resources Commissioner John Lebeaux**. “We encourage everyone to continue to support our farmers by buying locally grown Christmas trees and greens, as well as delicious food products at our winter farmers’ markets.”

Task Force officials noted that although reservoir levels are recovering during this natural recharge period, most are still below normal. The Massachusetts Water Resources Authority (MWRA) water supply system is not currently experiencing drought conditions, as defined within its individual plan.

“While the Quabbin Reservoir dipped into the below normal range during the month of November, mandatory restrictions are not yet necessary for our service area,” **said MWRA Executive Director Fred Laskey**. “As drought conditions continue across the state, it is important that residents and businesses in our member communities conserve water whenever possible.”

The declaration of a Drought Warning and Drought Advisory requires the Drought Management Task Force to meet on a regular basis to more closely assess conditions across the state, coordinate dissemination of information to the public, and help state, federal and local agencies prepare any responses that may be needed in the future. The Task Force will next meet in January. For further information on water conservation and what you can do, visit the Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs’ drought [page](#), the Department of Conservation and Recreation’s drought management [page](#), and the MassDEP Water Conservation [page](#).