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NOTICE

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Subject: FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: Areas of Commonwealth Experience Improved Drought Conditions, Below-Normal Precipitation Amounts Continue Across State



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

Areas of Commonwealth Experience Improved Drought Conditions, Below-Normal Precipitation Amounts Continue Across State *Monitoring of Water Resources to Continue, Indoor Water Conservation by Public Necessary*

BOSTON – February 10, 2017 – While many areas of the state experienced moderate levels of precipitation in January, 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 and Southeast Region, unchanged from the month of January; a Drought Watch for the Western Region and Central Region, down from a Drought Warning in the month of January; and a Drought Advisory for the Northeast Region and Cape and Islands, down from a Drought Watch for the Northeast Region in the month of January, and unchanged for the Cape and Islands. 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.

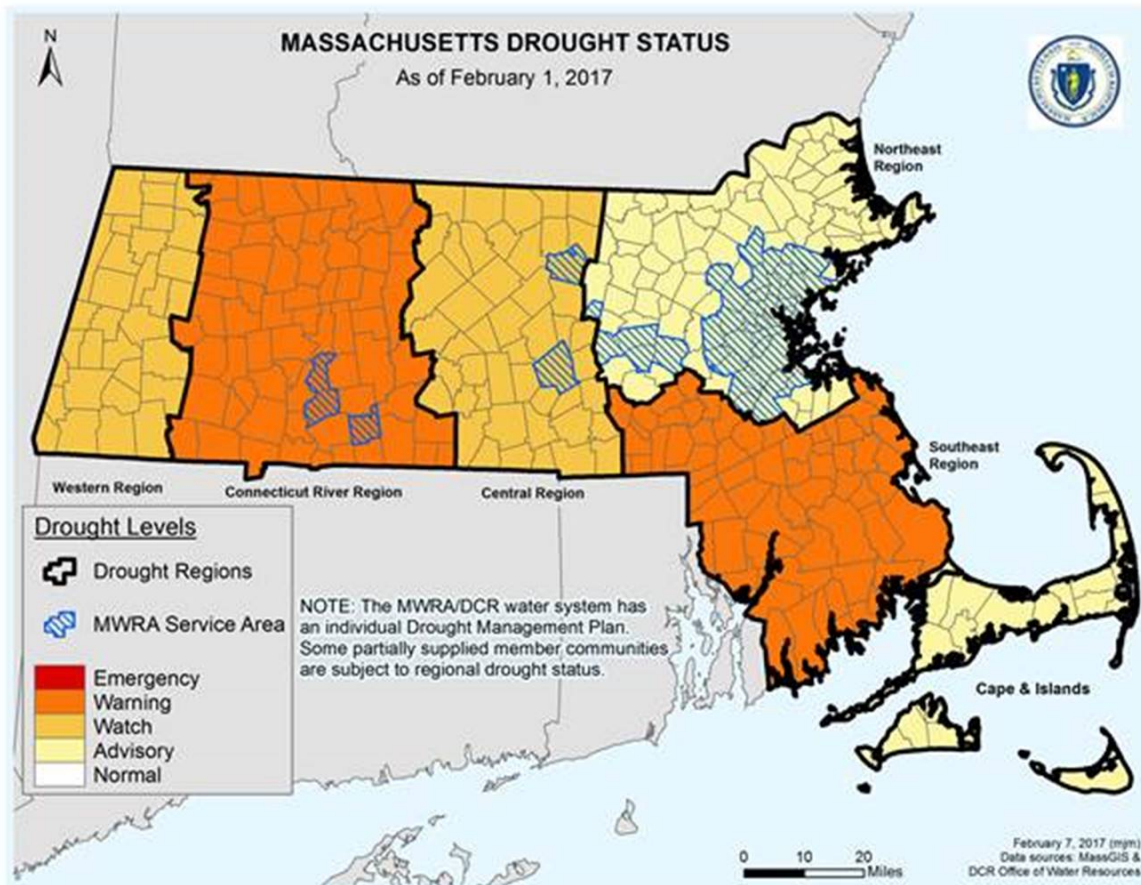
“Even though many water systems across the Commonwealth are recovering due to an increase in precipitation, it remains essential that we all continue to practice indoor water conservation methods to allow our state’s reservoirs, groundwater, and streamflow networks to fully rebound,” **said Energy and Environmental Affairs Secretary Matthew Beaton.** “With the uncertainty of the amount of precipitation over the course of this winter, and its impacts across the state on spring flows and water levels, it is important that we avoid stressing the Commonwealth’s water systems.”

“The recent rain and snow is helping water systems recover from the prolonged drought, but a complete recovery is still a long way off,” **said Massachusetts Emergency Management Agency (MEMA) Director Kurt Schwartz.** “The public is encouraged to continue indoor water conservation measures and to begin thinking about ways to reduce outdoor water use this coming spring and summer.”

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. A Drought Watch represents extremely low groundwater and streamflow levels resulting from prolonged periods of precipitation deficit, including a lack of snowfall in the winter months. The declaration of a Drought Watch warrants detailed monitoring of drought conditions, close coordination among state and federal agencies, and technical outreach and assistance for the affected municipalities. 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 (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.



“While it feels like the Commonwealth has had a lot of precipitation recently, the ongoing drought represents many months of deficit that is still being replenished,” **said Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection Commissioner Martin Suuberg.** “Groundwater elevations and ponds in several parts of the state are still at low levels and need time to rise. So, we urge consumers to continue to conserve water at home and work to ensure that this important resource recovers in the weeks and months ahead.”

Task Force officials noted that although reservoir levels are recovering during this natural recharge period, some 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.

“Quabbin Reservoir levels have been holding steady, but a good snowpack in the watersheds would help bring us up to normal levels by spring,” **said MWRA Executive Director Fred Laskey.** “It is still important for residents and businesses to be mindful of indoor water use and take measures to conserve.”

The declaration of a Drought Warning, Drought Watch, and a 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 March. 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](#).