



News for Immediate Release

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DEP Lifts Drought Declaration for 15 Counties in Western PA

Harrisburg — The Department of Environmental Protection announced today it has lifted a drought watch declaration for 15 counties in western Pennsylvania, based on recommendations from the Pennsylvania Drought Task Force.

"Rainfall over the last six weeks helped out the situation immensely in these counties," DEP Secretary Mike Krancer said. "We've seen improved stream-flows and soil moisture, and while some groundwater levels are still below normal we feel confident that conditions will continue to improve."

The drought watch was issued July 19 because of below-normal rainfall that resulted in low stream-flow conditions, decreased groundwater levels and precipitation deficits of up to five and a half inches. The Pennsylvania Drought Task Force uses reports and forecasts from the National Weather Service and U.S. Geological Survey, as well as analysis from DEP's drought monitoring program, to make its recommendations on issuing and lifting declarations.

Stream-flows have returned to normal for many areas. The upper reaches of the Allegheny basin are still below average. Recent rainfall has improved soil moisture in the region. Groundwater conditions are expected to return to normal over the coming months, as these levels typically lag two to three months behind precipitation.

While conditions have improved, it is not a complete recovery. The Pennsylvania Drought Task Force will continue to monitor conditions across the state.

A drought watch declaration, the first and least severe level of the state's three drought classifications, calls for a voluntary five-percent reduction in non-essential water use. A drought warning is the second level of the drought classification and asks residents to voluntarily reduce water use by 10-15 percent. A drought emergency is declared through proclamation by the governor, bans non-essential use and requires public water suppliers to implement contingency plans.

Water conservation tips and drought information can be found online at www.depweb.state.pa.us, keyword: "drought."

Media contact: Amanda Witman, 717-979-0218

Editor's note: DEP has lifted the drought watch in the following 15 counties: Allegheny, Beaver, Butler, Clarion, Crawford, Erie, Fayette, Forest, Greene, Lawrence, Mercer, Somerset, Venango, Warren and Washington.

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