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**Bureau of Watershed Conservation**

717-772-4048

**- - - DROUGHT CONDITION ADVISORY - - -**

Dear Public Water Supplier:

We are writing to you at this time to reinforce our concerns about the current drought conditions throughout Pennsylvania and to encourage you to anticipate a deterioration of water supply conditions in the near future. Currently, all counties except Crawford, Elk, Erie, Forest, McKean, Mercer, Venango and Warren are in drought warning, and those 8 counties are all in drought watch. We anticipate that emergency drought conditions will develop in parts of the Commonwealth this summer unless significant rainfall occurs in the next few weeks.

During parts of May and most of June, over 15 stream gages in the Delaware River basin, over 25 gages in the Susquehanna basin and several in the Ohio basin measured daily flows that were the lowest on record for the day. At many of those gages, this occurred for several consecutive days or in some cases for weeks. At one point, all the gages on the Susquehanna River main stem were measuring record lows. At the same time, gages at the mouth of the Lehigh, Schuylkill, West Branch Susquehanna, Kiskiminetas, Monongahela, and Beaver Rivers, along with many gages on smaller streams across the state, were also measuring record low seasonal flows.

The end-of-month ground water data is even more of a concern. Monitoring wells in 3 Ohio basin counties, 8 Delaware basin counties and 6 Susquehanna basin counties recorded record low monthly average water levels for the month of June. Since we only have monitoring wells in 50 counties, this means one-third set records. Including those, 21 wells recorded emergency levels, while 4 were at warning and another 4 were at watch levels.

Our list of public water supply systems that have instituted restrictions, mostly voluntary at this time, is growing rapidly. They already exceed 60 in number. These systems are being prudent.

While serious problems do not abound at this time, our concern is for the next few months. With ground water already at or near typical September/October levels, this all-important reservoir is in jeopardy. Ground water normally depletes during the summer/fall months and does not recover until after the foliage is down in the late fall. Until that time, evapo-transpiration consumes nearly all rainfall that does not run off

directly to streams, and very little if any rainfall penetrates to our ground water aquifers. When ground water reaches its typical low levels in September/October, we know that recovery is just around the corner. With levels already that low in early July, and recovery still four months away, most of our water supply systems should be anticipating problems.

If you have not already done so, please review your drought contingency plan and update your plan if necessary to account for any changes in either your sources or the demands on your system. If you do not have a drought contingency plan, you should be preparing one. If you are preparing one for the first time, we have information available to help you, and we can provide technical assistance. Call our Division of Water Use Planning at the number above if you need assistance. After you have completed your plan, you will need to submit it to us for review and approval.

We encourage you to use the Drought Information Center on our web site at <http://www.dep.state.pa.us> (choose Drought Information Center). We post drought updates on that site on a regular basis to keep you informed of emerging conditions. That site also either provides or links to information that is useful for monitoring conditions in your area or for educating your customers in various methods of conserving water. If you have a web site, you may wish to consider linking directly to our site, so your customers will have ready access to our information as well.

Remember, in a drought watch, we should all be seeking to reduce water use by about 5 percent through voluntary conservation measures. During a warning, our goal is 10-15 percent reductions, still through voluntary measures. Under a gubernatorial emergency proclamation, bans on nonessential water uses become mandatory, and water rationing may also be employed if necessary, with the approval of the Pennsylvania Emergency Management Council. Prudent use of our resources now can help to prevent, or at least delay, the need for emergency measures later.

If you have any questions, or we can be of assistance to you in any way, please feel free to contact our Division of Water Use Planning at the telephone number listed above.

Sincerely,

Stuart I. Gansell  
Director and  
Pennsylvania State Drought Coordinator