

Weekly Drought Report November 8, 2010

Precipitation

Over the last 7 days, Pennsylvania has received between 0.01 to about 2.0 inches of precipitation. Unfortunately, the greatest amount of rain fell in the eastern half of the state and not the western half – the region having precipitation deficits and area that would benefit most from the precipitation. The highest amounts fell from the Philadelphia area up into Lehigh County.

Negative 90-day departures from normal continue to persist in the western third of the state. Precipitation indicators in Forest, Mercer, and Jefferson moved from normal to watch levels. Many of the monitoring stations graphs in the west, although not moving out of their previous status show a decline in moving 90-day precipitation.

Surface Water

A review of instantaneous streamflows indicate that current flows remain at or above average over eastern portion of Pennsylvania with the western portion at or below normal with some gages displaying flows less than 10th percentile level. Overall, the instantaneous streamflows are dropping.

The 30-day moving average streamflow values continue to decline in the western portion of the state with two counties, Beaver and Somerset, moving back in to “Watch” status. It appears that a few more counties may also return to “Watch” status in the western portion of the state unless new rainfall occurs this week and specifically Raccoon Creek at Moffats Mill (Beaver County), moving into “Warning” at the end of the week at its current rate of decline. In the eastern portion of Pennsylvania the 30-day average flows are also decreasing in the northern part with the southern part still enjoying increasing flow values.

Groundwater

Groundwater indicators have not changed from last week’s report. All monitoring well indicators remain as “Normal” except Fayette County’s well whose 30-day moving average remains steady in the “Watch” level. A number of other wells in the west, although in normal are showing a downward trend in their 30-day moving averages while those in the eastern half of the state are at normal or in some cases at way above normal ranges.

Public Water Supply Agencies (PWSAs)

25 PWSAs remain on restrictions and 7 PWSAs have returned to normal operations with the removal of all restrictions.

Precipitation forecast

Forecasts call for no precipitation through the majority of this week with slight chances of showers late in the week into next. However, the forecast for November 16 through November 24th is calling for up to 3 to 4 inches of precipitation in the eastern half of the state down to 2 inches in the far west.

Summary

The Statewide Drought Task Force is scheduled to meet tomorrow at 10:00 am. Conditions will be discussed at that time. Given the improved conditions for approximately 2/3 of the state, I am recommending we lift the drought watch and warning declarations for the eastern and central portions of the state. Because there are still precipitation deficits and declining streamflows in the western portion of PA, I am recommending this portion of the state either remain in drought watch (13 counties) or downgrade from drought warning to drought watch (8 counties).

Remain in Drought Watch:

Armstrong, Butler, Clarion, Crawford, Elk, Erie, Forest, Indiana, Jefferson, McKean, Venango, Warren, Westmoreland

Downgrade from Drought Warning to Drought Watch:

Allegheny, Beaver, Fayette, Greene, Lawrence, Mercer, Somerset, Washington

All remaining counties in Normal.