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**DROUGHT WATCH ISSUED FOR SOUTHEASTERN NEW YORK
Water Conservation Encouraged in 21 Counties**

New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) Commissioner Erin M. Crotty today issued a drought watch for 13 counties in southeastern New York, including Cortland, Delaware, Dutchess, Greene, Madison, Orange, Otsego, Putnam, Rockland Schoharie, Sullivan, Ulster, and Westchester.

The drought watch expands upon the August 24, 2001 drought watch for eight counties along the Pennsylvania border, including Allegany, Broome, Cattaraugus, Chautauqua, Chemung, Chenango, Steuben and Tioga. The 21 counties under the current drought watch are located in the Chemung, Delaware, Genesee, Hudson, Mohawk, Ramapo and Susquehanna River Basins.

“Conserving water is important all year long, but particularly during extended dry periods,” Commissioner Crotty said. “Residents in the counties included in the watch, particularly those dependent on private groundwater wells, are encouraged to conserve water whenever possible until conditions improve.”

The Commissioner said that although water supply conditions are generally normal throughout most of the state, below normal precipitation during the last six months, combined with low stream flow and low groundwater levels, have prompted the need for action at this time in certain counties.

A drought watch is the first of four levels of state drought advisories (watch, warning, emergency and disaster). No mandatory restrictions are in place under a drought watch. Local public water suppliers are urged to promote voluntary conservation and to review and update their drought contingency plans.

Residents are encouraged to voluntarily limit their use of water outdoors, including using brooms rather than hoses to clean driveways and sidewalks, and also fix leaking pipes, hoses and faucets.

The drought watch is triggered by the State Drought Index, which reflects precipitation levels, reservoir/lake levels, and stream flow and groundwater levels in the nine drought regions of the state. Each of these indicators is assigned a weighted value based on its significance to various uses in a region.

Precipitation deficits in the counties covered by the drought watch are beginning to compound, particularly in light of low rainfall levels in the month of October. Stream flows and groundwater levels are significantly below normal in these counties and groundwater levels are not expected to improve in the immediate future. The National Weather Service outlook for November indicates near normal temperatures and precipitation.

For additional information, people can visit DEC’s “Drought” web page at:

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