

## **Water Supply Conditions Summary – April 15, 2016**

### Recent Dry Spell Affecting the Recovery of Drinking Water Supply Indicators

The slow recovery of drinking water supply indicators experienced throughout the winter is beginning to be affected by the recent dry weather spell. For now, there is no direct impact on drinking water supplies, but continued dry conditions over the next two months could adversely impact the much-needed replenishment of water sources leading into the peak water use season beginning June 1<sup>st</sup>.

Slightly above-average precipitation over several recent months had been producing a slow but steady recovery in the drought indicators monitored by the New Jersey DEP. However, measured rainfall over the past 30 days has been below average, and this has been enough to interrupt the tenuous recovery experienced to date.

In nearly all cases, reservoir storage has been restored to expected average levels for this time of year. Meanwhile, the recovery of streamflow and unconfined (shallow) groundwater levels, which had been progressing very slowly, has now begun to erode. Despite the mixed recovery and recent short-term trend, conditions do not adversely affect drinking water supply supplies at this time.

As temperatures warm, evapotranspiration can be expected to increase as the days grow longer, and trees and plants continue to flower and “leaf out”. Water demands, in turn, will also begin to increase due to outdoor water use associated with lawn care, gardening and other maintenance/recreation activities around the home. Accordingly, NJDEP water professionals will continue to closely monitor indicators.

As is always the case, wise water use should be practiced by all to avoid unnecessary water waste. For tips on using water efficiently around the home or office, go to <http://njdrought.org/ideas.html>. If the next few months are dry, steps by the DEP and others may be needed to protect our limited drinking water supplies.

## **Water Conservation: Ideas for Saving Water**

New Jersey is often referred to as being “water rich” since we typically receive about 45 inches of precipitation annually. However, rainfall varies from year to year and even regionally within the state (the hilly northwest is generally wetter than the coastal plain to the southeast). Despite fairly abundant precipitation in most years, increased customer demands quickly deplete water reserves in even moderately dry years.

Summer outdoor water use increases dramatically as people water lawns and gardens, wash cars, and fill swimming pools. From May thru September, when hotter, drier weather conditions prevail, it is even more important to conserve water in order to avoid shortages and disruptive (and costly) water use restrictions.

By using water wisely, we can preserve more water in reservoirs and aquifers while sustaining levels in our streams, lakes and rivers. These water savings are simple to put into practice and enhance recreational uses and aesthetic enjoyment while providing and protecting habitat for our wildlife. They also can reduce the amount of public dollars spent on water supply infrastructure while minimizing energy costs and the unnecessary generation of greenhouse gases.

### **Follow these QUICK TIPS to Reduce Water Waste:**

- Water lawns (and outdoor plants) less frequently (2-3 times per week) for no more than 30 minutes. This allows the soil to absorb the water and enables roots to grow more deeply, which encourages drought tolerance;
- Never water during the heat of the day, as this promotes evaporation and leads to water waste;
- Sprinkler systems should be set to water after sunset or before dawn, and by law should be equipped with an automated shut-off switch that disables the system following rainfall.
- Install water-saving showerheads and faucet aerators in the bathroom and kitchen (available at most home improvement stores and some supermarkets);
- Do not let faucets run when brushing your teeth or washing the dishes;
- Run washing machines and dishwashers only when they are full, or select the properly sized wash cycle for the current laundry load;
- Use a broom to sweep the sidewalk, rather than a hose;
- Use mulch and native plants to conserve water in the garden;
- Use a rain barrel to capture water from a downspout to use later for watering gardens and plants;
- Use soaker hoses or drip irrigation to water trees, gardens and flower beds;

For more detailed information on how you can conserve water in and outside your home, click on the link below. This site also includes related product information, environmental benefits and cost estimates, and a water use calculator to figure where you can conserve water in your daily routine.

**Remember, if we all do a little, we can save a LOT!**