

Michael F. Easley
Governor



State of North Carolina Office of the Governor

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GOV. EASLEY EXTENDS LIMITS ON WATER USE TO FOUR MORE COUNTIES *Hardest-Hit Areas Of Western N.C. Asked To Implement Conservation Measures*

RALEIGH – Gov. Mike Easley today directed state agencies in four more counties in western North Carolina to take specific water conservation steps after the counties were added to the list of those suffering from severe drought. Easley has also asked water systems in those areas to implement conservation measures. Twenty-one western counties are now categorized with either extreme or severe drought.

“All water systems, especially those in the driest areas of North Carolina, should review their water supply plans and implement conservation measures as the drought continues and its severity worsens,” said Easley. “While drinking water supplies are sufficient to meet demand at this time, we need to be prepared for the worsening conditions that could come our way with the heat of the summer.”

The governor has expanded his directive to state agencies in counties currently listed with extreme or severe drought to include: Ashe, Caldwell, Polk and Watauga counties. These agencies are directed to stop all non-essential water use and all citizens are urged to voluntarily reduce their water consumption by at least 10 percent. In addition to the four new counties; Avery, Buncombe, Burke, Cherokee, Clay, Graham, Haywood, Henderson, Jackson, Macon, Madison, McDowell, Mitchell, Rutherford, Swain, Transylvania, and Yancey counties continue to be listed with extreme or severe drought.

In some parts of the state, voluntary conservation efforts have worked well and are making a difference. However, in areas where voluntary efforts are not as successful, further mandatory steps may be needed if there is no significant let up in the drought.

Easley recommends the following simple steps that all North Carolinians can use to conserve during this drought:

- Take shorter showers.
- Do not leave water running while rinsing dishes, shaving or brushing teeth.
- Add compost and other organic material to your soil to improve its water-holding capacity.
- Keep a pitcher of cold water in the fridge, instead of running tap water until it is cool.
- Use a bucket to water your plants, not a hose.
- Water lawns and gardens early in the morning or late in the evening, not in the heat of mid-day, to prevent evaporation.

Today's update from the U.S. Drought Monitor reports 57 of North Carolina's 100 counties are experiencing either moderate, severe or extreme drought, down from 83 counties last week. There are five levels of drought (abnormally dry, moderate, severe, extreme and exceptional) that are based on stream flows as well as lake, reservoir and ground water levels. Thirty-six counties are considered to be in a moderate drought and 36 counties are abnormally dry.

The drought has prompted 20 public water systems in North Carolina to issue voluntary water conservation restrictions and another eight water systems to issue mandatory water restrictions. The water systems that have issued mandatory water conservation are in Chatham, Johnston, New Hanover, Union and Wake counties.

Officials with the N.C. Drought Management Advisory Council earlier this week reported that streamflows in the counties suffering from extreme drought hit near-record lows in May. Agricultural impacts of the severe and extreme drought include low hay yields and vegetables, crops and cattle under stress. Officials with the N.C. Division of Forest Resources say the dry conditions continue to create high potential for wildfires and urge people to postpone outdoor burning until rainfall levels return to normal.

For more information on current drought conditions, go to www.ncdrought.org. State agencies that need guidance on water conservation measures should go to www.sustainablenc.org/neguidance.htm.

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