

Water Supply Conditions – May 29, 2009

The return of more seasonable weather, including intermittent rain events since mid-April, has allowed a gradual recovery in stream flows and shallow ground water throughout much of the State. Rainfall amounts, however, have not sufficiently reversed the effects of extended dry spell that developed over the first three months of 2009.

The 5.96” of rain and melted snow that fell from January through March was the 2nd driest on record, with measured precipitation about half of the long-term average for that period. Moreover, February was the driest on record with less than ¾” of precipitation statewide. Over the past year, southern New Jersey has been wetter than the northern half of the State, reversing the trend from a year ago when the northern portion of New Jersey had received considerably more rainfall than the south.

Particularly noteworthy is the distinction between the extreme northern and southern ends of the State in terms of the amount of snow and rain that has fallen during the past 3 months (90 days). Cumulative precipitation figures range from a surplus of nearly 2.5” in extreme southern New Jersey to a deficit of about 3.5” in the northern-most counties, and this disparity is reflected in the latest water supply indicators tracked by the Department.

Stream flows in the Northeast and Northwest drought regions are ranked as “extremely” dry while shallow ground water recently slipped to “severely” and “moderately” dry, respectively. In the Central drought region, unconfined ground water is considered “moderately” dry while stream flows are “severely” dry. “Severely dry” stream flows and “moderately” dry shallow ground water levels are the status in the Coastal North and Southwest drought regions, while those indicators are ranked as “severely dry” in the Coastal South region. Surface water reservoirs are either at or near full capacity, or slightly above average for this time of year.

With the growing season rapidly approaching, we remain hopeful for the continuation of replenishing spring rains to balance conditions around the State. The public should be mindful of using water wisely and efficiently at this time of the year, particularly as outdoor water consumption increases in the coming months due to landscaping and other outdoor water use activities.

Useful Water Conservation Tips

1. To save water (and money!) in the home, fix leaky faucets and pipes.
2. Do not over-water lawns and landscaping – 2 times per week for 20 minutes is enough to keep grass and plants green and thriving under most conditions.
3. Turn off the faucet while brushing teeth and shaving.
4. Run washing machines and dishwashers only when full.
5. Install water conserving toilets, faucets and showerheads.

A complete list of water conservation tips at (www.njdrought.org/ideas.html).