

Water Supply Conditions Summary – June 28, 2016

Continued Dry Spell Beginning to Degrade Drinking Water Supply Indicators

The recovery of drinking water supply reserves experienced over the winter has gradually been erased, and the prevailing dry weather pattern is beginning to take a toll. While there are no adverse impacts on drinking water supplies at this time, the status of stream flows and ground water levels points to potential trouble ahead in terms of a developing water supply drought. If dry conditions persist, the DEP may be forced to take actions to preserve an adequate water supply in the interest of public health and safety.

In the northern two-thirds of the State, streamflow is now rated as “extremely dry”, the lowest category, while in the Southwest and Coastal South regions streams are ranked as “moderately” and “severely” dry, respectively. Unconfined (shallow) ground water levels are faring only marginally better, with a “severely” dry rank in all but the Coastal South region where they remain “moderately” dry. Reservoir storage levels are only modestly below average, boosted by significant pumping and storage through the winter and spring, actions that have helped offset the immediate impact of dry conditions on drinking water supplies.

Beginning the peak water use season on June 1st with less than favorable conditions, as we did, constrains our ability to stretch supplies through the summer unless we receive abundant rainfall and water demands are kept in check. Accordingly, DEP water professionals are closely monitoring drought conditions to plan for and recommend administrative actions, if they become necessary. Such actions would begin with designation of a Drought Watch in the affected area(s), followed by a Drought Warning and, if warranted, a Water Emergency.

It is important to stress that being mindful of our water use, both in and outdoors, is critical to stretching supplies and possibly avoiding the need for restrictions being put in place later. For tips on using water efficiently around the home or office, go to <http://njdrought.org/ideas.html>.