

## **Water Supply Conditions Summary – September 1, 2016**

### Drought Watch Continues for Three Northern New Jersey Regions

A return to abnormally dry, warm weather through much of August has gradually eroded the progress made by abundant rainfall in July, although the indicator values remain above the marked lows observed at the end of June. Persistent droughty conditions coupled with high water demands threaten a worsening of the situation during the final weeks of summer.

July's rainfall brought much-needed relief from conditions that had begun to strain water supply indicators across the State's northern tier. July's rains dramatically reduced the 90-day precipitation shortfall tracked by NJDEP as a primary water supply indicator. The rainfall and resultant runoff/aquifer recharge resulted in moderate, if short-lived, improvements in stream flows and unconfined ground water levels.

A Drought Watch was issued on July 25, 2016, for the Northeast, Northwest and Central Drinking-Water-Supply regions due to degraded water supply indicators. The affected drought regions include Bergen, Essex, Hudson, Hunterdon, Mercer, Middlesex, Morris, Passaic, Somerset, Sussex, Union and Warren counties.

Stream flows currently are rated as "severely dry" in all but the Coastal South region, where they are considered "moderately dry". Shallow ground water levels, faring slightly better, continue to be ranked as "moderately dry" in the three regions currently under Drought Watch. Overall, reservoir storage remains in fairly good shape, although levels in key systems in the Northeast and Central regions are below average and dropping more steeply than normal. This is due to sparse rainfall, continued high temperatures, elevated customer demands, and evaporation.

Looking forward, reservoir storage and depletion rates will be critical to determining the need for further administrative actions to curb the effects of lingering drought conditions. These concerns can be alleviated by abundant rainfall in key areas over the coming weeks as well as cooperation by the public to moderate its water use. Such actions can effectively extend supplies into the autumn when cooler temperatures and reduced water usage can be expected.

As always, the NJDEP will continue to monitor conditions. 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>.