From: Herbold, Stacey
Subject: Drought Update - Drought Conditions are Teetering
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May 2021

Drought Update

The Message

The state is teetering on the edge of widespread drought. Water suppliers should continue to track drought conditions and water supplies carefully, as well as request customers to conserve.

Community water systems and municipalities should report restrictions to NHDES for posting on the NHDES website using the electronic reporting form.

Guidance:
Implementing Restrictions at Public Water Systems
Lawn Water Restriction Guidance for Municipalities

NHDES Drought Management Information Center

Low-Income Residential Drought Assistance Program

Summary

- In accordance with the U.S. Drought Monitor, approximately 50% of the state is categorized as moderately dry and approximately 6% of the state is experiencing moderate drought conditions. While this is an

improvement from conditions in mid-April, low stream flows and groundwater levels across the state are indicative of a more widespread hydrological drought.

- The direction of which way conditions will go by the end of June is unknown. Month to date precipitation levels are below average. No significant amounts of precipitation are forecast for the next 7-days. The forecast for June is equal chances of above normal, normal, and below normal precipitation. There is also a slight chance of above normal temperatures in the central and southern part of the state, which could potentially exacerbate dry conditions, while temperature predictions are for equal chances of above normal, normal, and below normal in the north.

- The Seasonal Drought Outlook for June, July, and August indicates drought will persist in the areas currently experiencing drought, which include small portions of Coos County, Grafton County, and Sullivan County. The prediction is considered to be of moderate certainty as temperatures are expected to be above normal, which has a drying effect.

Drought Conditions

U.S. Drought Monitor

Since the beginning of April, moderate drought and abnormally dry conditions have expanded and then contracted across the state. Current conditions:

- 5.65% of NH is experiencing moderate drought (D1) conditions.
- 48.01% of NH is experiencing abnormally dry conditions.
- 46.33% of NH is experiencing normal conditions.

NWS Northeast River Forecast Center: Precipitation Deficits

Overall, near normal precipitation in April brought some relief to dryness, but 90-day precipitation departures remain and range from 1" to 6". Also, month to date precipitation amounts are below average across most of the state.

Drought Impacts

April NH Geological Survey Monthly Groundwater Level Report

During the month of April, most wells in the monitoring network were below their monthly averages. The only wells with groundwater levels that were within the normal or above-normal ranges were Nashua, New London, Colebrook and Barnstead. Groundwater level trends were mixed in the Merrimack River basin and Seacoast Region. The wells showing an upward trend were likely responding to localized continued rain events and snowmelt. In the case of Nashua, the upward trend was likely a result from a high, stabilized groundwater table from an adjacent locally dammed reservoirs.

NH USGS WaterWatch Stream Flows

Seven day average stream flows are below average for the majority of state and indicate hydrologic drought conditions in parts of Coos County, Carrol County, Grafton County, and Belknap County.

Forecasts and Outlooks

Precipitation and Temperature Forecasts

June Predictions:
There is an equal chance for above normal, normal, or below normal precipitation.

There is a slight likelihood of above normal temperatures in central and southern NH and equal chances of above normal, normal, and below normal temperatures to the north.

June-July-August Predictions:

There is a slight likelihood for above normal precipitation.

There is a likelihood of above normal temperatures.

Seasonal Drought Outlook

The U.S. Seasonal Drought Outlook predicts drought will persist on the western border of the state through the end of August in parts of Sullivan County, Grafton Count, and Coos County.

Additional Resources

Regional Forecast - National Weather Service Forecast Discussion
Precipitation and Temperature Outlooks - NWS Climate Prediction Center

Visit the NHDES Drought Management Webpage

NH Department of Environmental Services | 29 Hazen Drive, Concord, NH 03302