

Town of Wrentham Stage V Water Ban – Effective September 9, 2016

Following six months of below average rainfall and warm weather, the Commonwealth of Massachusetts declared a Drought Warning for all of Central and Eastern Massachusetts.

According to our Water Management Act Permit issued by the Department of Environmental Protection, the Town of Wrentham must meet the state standard of 65 residential gallons per capita per day (RGPCD). Wrentham does not meet this standard. Wrentham's average summer withdrawals over the last five years have been more than 95% higher than winter demand.

Currently, the Town's aquifer water supplies have experienced a significant drop and are extremely low due to drought conditions and excessively high demand for water for outdoor use. These conditions raise serious public safety concerns including increased risk for wildfires and possible contamination of the water supply as the aquifer's water levels continue to decrease.

To combat this hazard the Town has declared a **Stage V Water Ban**. Effective immediately, all outdoor water use is banned. **There are no exceptions to this ban**. The Massachusetts Emergency Management Agency is asking the public, including household and business that draw water from private wells, to conserve water by reducing both outdoor and indoor use.

The state's latest drought status update can be found at www.mass.gov/eea/agencies/dcr/water-res-protection/water-data-tracking/drought-status.html. This watering ban is mandatory for all residents using town water and voluntary for residents with private wells. The town will notify residents when the state lifts the Drought Warning.

How Residents Can Help

Unfortunately, lawn watering does not return to our ground water as is commonly thought. Some of it evaporates in the air and on the surface especially in extremely hot weather. And, depending on soil type, the rest may take years to reach an aquifer.

Things you can do today to help the town conserve water include:

- Leave lawn clippings on the grass. This cools the ground and holds in moisture.
- While fertilizers promote growth, they also increase water consumption. Let your lawn go dormant (brown).
- Remember to program automatic sprinkler system timers to coincide with allowed usage
- Hand-water flower and vegetable gardens
- Use a broom to clean patios, sidewalks and driveways
- Use commercial car washes that recycle their water.

Wrentham Water Ban FAQ

Q: What is a Drought Warning and what causes it to be triggered?

A: A Drought Warning, the fourth of five levels of drought conditions outlined in the Massachusetts Drought Management Plan, indicates a level of dry conditions that warrant closer tracking by government agencies. The decline of the state's rainfall since March led to the drought condition, with cumulative precipitation deficits of four to five inches below normal for the months of April, May and June. For the months of May and June, precipitation was less than 61 percent of normal. Data from the state's groundwater, streamflow and reservoir monitoring network show very low levels for July and August.

Q: How does this affect me as a resident?

A: Effective immediately, no outside water use is allowed.

Q: What water uses are subject to the mandatory ban?

A: All non-essential and permissive uses allowed under lower ban stages are subject to the Stage V mandatory ban. These uses include the irrigation of lawns and landscaping using sprinklers or automatic irrigation systems, washing of vehicles except in a commercial car wash or as necessary for operator safety.

Q: What water uses are not subject to the mandatory ban?

A: Only uses required for health and safety reasons are allowed. Any other outdoor water use is banned.

Q: Are there any permissive uses between the hours of 7am and 7pm?

A: No, a Stage V Water Ban prohibits all outside water use at any time.

Q: What if I have a private well?

A: Currently, only those residents using town water are required to comply with the watering ban under our current bylaws; however, private wells also draw from the same aquifers that supply town water, so voluntary compliance on the part of homeowners with a private well is greatly appreciated. The Massachusetts Emergency Management Agency has also requested homeowners and businesses utilizing private wells also comply with the ban and water conservation efforts.

Q: What happens if I don't comply?

A: By not complying with the state mandated water ban you put yourself and other residents at risk by creating a public safety hazard. If there were to be a fire (caused by lightning or a discarded cigarette), inadequate water levels may impede the fire department's ability to control the fire. Also, as the town's wells levels lower and demand remains, they begin to pull water from around the well increasing the likelihood of contamination. Violations may also result in a fine (\$50 – first violation, \$100 – second violation, \$200 and/ or service termination – third violation).

Q: Doesn't water used to water the lawn return to the groundwater?

A: No. Utilizing sprinklers or lawn irrigation systems cause a significant amount of the water to evaporate since it is exposed to the heat while in the air and when laying on the surface of the lawn. The rest, depending on soil type and rockiness, can take years – even decades – to reach an aquifer. This has been proven by geological surveys that have been tracking the decline of water resources for years.

Q: So what can I do to help?

A:

- Leave lawn clippings on the grass. This cools the ground and holds in moisture.
- Don't fertilize your lawn. While fertilizers promote growth, they also increase water consumption. Let your lawn go dormant (brown).
- Remember to shut off automatic sprinkler system timers
- Use a broom to clean patios, sidewalks and driveways
- Use commercial car washes that recycle their water

Q: Where can I find more information on water conservation?

A: There are many resources online. Here are a few...

- <http://wateruseitwisely.com/100-ways-to-conserve/>
- <http://www.home-water-works.org/water-conservation-tips/home>
- <http://environment.nationalgeographic.com/environment/freshwater/water-conservation-tips>