

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:
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Drought Conditions in New Hampshire Predicted to Persist Through September State Drought Management Team Convenes To Discuss Current Conditions and Impacts

Concord, NH - With "severe drought" conditions across 28% of New Hampshire and "moderate drought" and "abnormally dry" conditions persisting across the rest of New Hampshire, on Thursday, September 3, 2020, the New Hampshire Drought Management Team met to discuss drought conditions and impacts in the state. State Climatologist Mary Stampone provided a briefing on the latest drought conditions and forecasts, which indicated that drought will likely improve but persist across southeastern New Hampshire through September. According to Stampone, the well-below average precipitation received in August caused drought conditions to deteriorate. She also indicated that recent rainfall and the precipitation forecast for the next two weeks will not be enough to make up for the precipitation deficit for the year.

Staff from New Hampshire Department of Environmental Services (NHDES) updated the team on water resource impacts and management efforts. Lake levels continue to fall and are at or near levels experienced in the 2016 drought. While water supply reservoirs are low, they currently have enough water to meet demands. Boaters and swimmers should take caution on recreation lakes, as hazards due to submerged obstructions that are now closer to the surface.

Flow conditions are spotty in NH's rivers and streams as a result of small storms providing brief relief in some parts of the state, however most of the state is experiencing below normal flows. Water management actions, such as reduced outdoor water use and switching to groundwater sources, continue to be implemented in the Lamprey and Souhegan River watersheds as a part of the Instream Flow Program. NHDES conducted a release of water from dams in the Lamprey River watershed to provide relief to aquatic organisms in late June and in mid-August. Another release is planned for mid-September. These releases provide a significant, but brief, increase in Lamprey River flow to support stressed aquatic life, but have little effect on lake levels.

Of the 31 monitoring wells across the state, the majority are much lower than normal, with water levels that dropped between July and August in all except one well. Large groundwater permit holders are being held to permit conditions related to reducing withdrawals during drought, and community water systems have been urged to implement outdoor water use restrictions. To date, 148 community water systems have implemented restrictions.

NHDES urges the public to abide by water restrictions and be conservation-minded. To view the latest drought conditions, the presentation slides from Thursday's meeting, and information related to saving water and managing residential wells during drought, go to www.des.nh.gov and use the "A-Z list" and scroll down to Drought Management.

The Drought Management Team is led by NHDES and is comprised of key representatives across state government, academia, industry and other organizations. For more information, contact Jim Martin, NHDES Public Information Officer, at james.martin@des.nh.gov or (603) 568-9777.