



## Energy and Environmental Affairs

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CHARLIE BAKER  
GOVERNOR

For Immediate Release - April 14, 2017

KARYN POLITO  
LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR

MATTHEW A. BEATON  
SECRETARY

### Portion of Commonwealth Returns to Normal Drought Level, Water Deficit Continues Throughout State

#### Monitoring of Water Resources to Continue, Indoor Water Conservation by Public Necessary

#### Media Contact

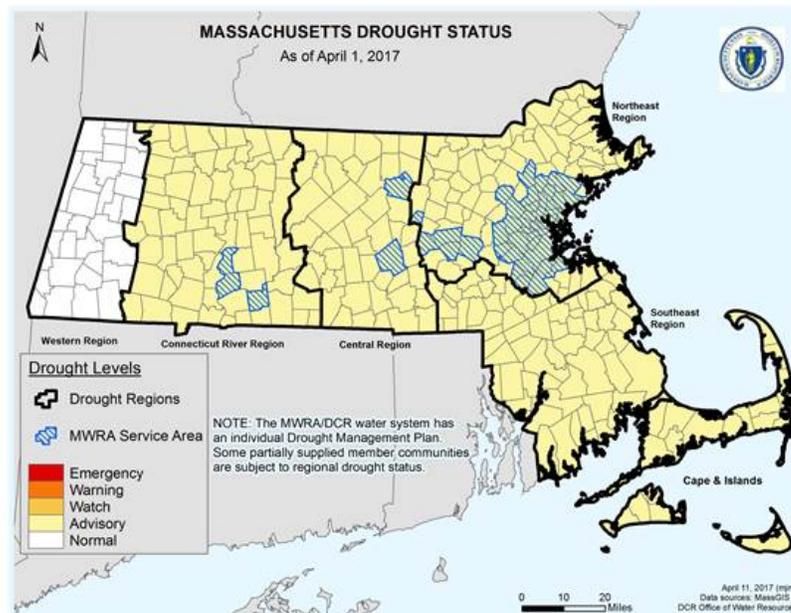
Katie Gronendyke - 617-626-1129 or [katie.gronendyke@state.ma.us](mailto:katie.gronendyke@state.ma.us)

**BOSTON** – While the month of March started to see higher levels of precipitation across the Commonwealth, a majority of the state continues to experience a water deficit. As a result, Energy and Environmental Affairs (EEA) Secretary Matthew Beaton today declared the following drought levels throughout the Commonwealth: a Drought Advisory for the Connecticut River Valley, Central, Northeast, Southeast Regions as well as the Cape and Islands; down from a Drought Watch for the Connecticut River Valley and Southeast Region in the month of March, and unchanged for the Central and Northeast Regions and the Cape and Islands. Additionally, Secretary Beaton declared Normal Conditions for the Western Region, down from a Drought Advisory in the month of March. The declarations were the result of a recommendation issued from a recent meeting of the [Drought Management Task Force](#), comprised of state and federal officials, and other entities, and will remain in effect until water levels return to normal in the affected regions.

“Even with widespread rain conditions recently experienced throughout Massachusetts, the state as a whole has not fully rebounded from over two years of a precipitation deficit,” **said Energy and Environmental Affairs Secretary Matthew Beaton**. “It is difficult for periods of heavy rain to absorb into the ground to impact hydrological systems, and as a result, it is still important to incorporate best water conservation practices into our daily lives to not stress water systems.”

“While recent precipitation has helped to reduce the severity of the drought in parts of the state, drought conditions continue and the public is urged to take steps to reduce both indoor and outdoor water usage,” **said Massachusetts Emergency Management Agency (MEMA) Director Kurt Schwartz**. “Additionally, brush and wildland fires often occur during the spring and with dry conditions, the public is urged to exercise extreme caution when using matches, charcoal grills, and other open flames during outdoor activities.”

A Drought Advisory, as outlined in the [Massachusetts Drought Management Plan](#)  1MB, indicates a level of dry conditions that warrants closer tracking by government agencies.



The state continues to intensely monitor and assess the drought situation, and any associated environmental and agricultural impacts. As the Commonwealth transition's into the growing and watering season, the state reminds residents to think carefully about what they plant, encourages good landscape practices, recommends watering plants only early in the morning or late in the evening to minimize evaporation. Furthermore, residents are asked reduce indoor water use, address leaks as soon as possible, and for larger buildings and businesses to conduct water audits to ensure they identify areas of leaks and potential water conservation. All these steps will greatly help reduce water use to ensure essential

needs such as drinking water and fire protection are being met, habitats have enough water to recover, and to stretch our water supplies. Furthermore, the state asks the public to be mindful of the amount of water they are using, and to reduce indoor water use, address leaks as soon as possible, and for larger buildings and businesses to conduct water audits to ensure they identify areas of leaks and potential water conservation. All these steps will greatly help reduce water use to ensure essential needs such as drinking water and fire protection are being met, habitats have enough water to recover, and to stretch our water supplies into the summer.

The Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection (MassDEP) continues to provide technical assistance to communities on managing systems, including assistance on use of emergency connections and water supplies, as well as assisting towns on how to request a declaration of drought emergency.

“Public water suppliers across the Commonwealth are good stewards of the environment,” **said Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection Commissioner Martin Suuberg**. “As the spring and summer seasons approach, MassDEP will continue to work with local water systems.”

Task Force officials also noted the lack of snow pack in March that would typically result in slow recharge of the ground. Additionally, officials noted that while reservoir levels are recovering during this natural recharge period, some are still below normal. The Massachusetts Water Resources Authority (MWRA) water supply system is not currently experiencing drought conditions, as defined within its individual plan.

“The recent rainfall has certainly helped, but the Quabbin Reservoir remains below the normal level for this time of year,” **said MWRA Executive Director Fred Laskey**. “It is important that customers in our service area continue to conserve water, particularly as the warmer summer season approaches, so that the reservoir can fully recover to normal levels.”

The declaration of a Drought Advisory requires the Drought Management Task Force to meet on a regular basis to more closely assess conditions across the state, coordinate dissemination of information to the public, and help state, federal and local agencies prepare any responses that may be needed in the future. The Task Force will next meet in May. For further information on water conservation and what residents can do, [visit the Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs' drought page](#), the [Department of Conservation and Recreation's drought management page](#), and the [MassDEP Water Conservation page](#).