

PRESS RELEASE

Mild Drought Conditions Declared in Western Region of the Commonwealth

Other Regions Remain in Normal Conditions

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

3/12/2021

Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs

Drought Management Task Force

Massachusetts Emergency Management Agency

Water Resources Commission

MEDIA CONTACT

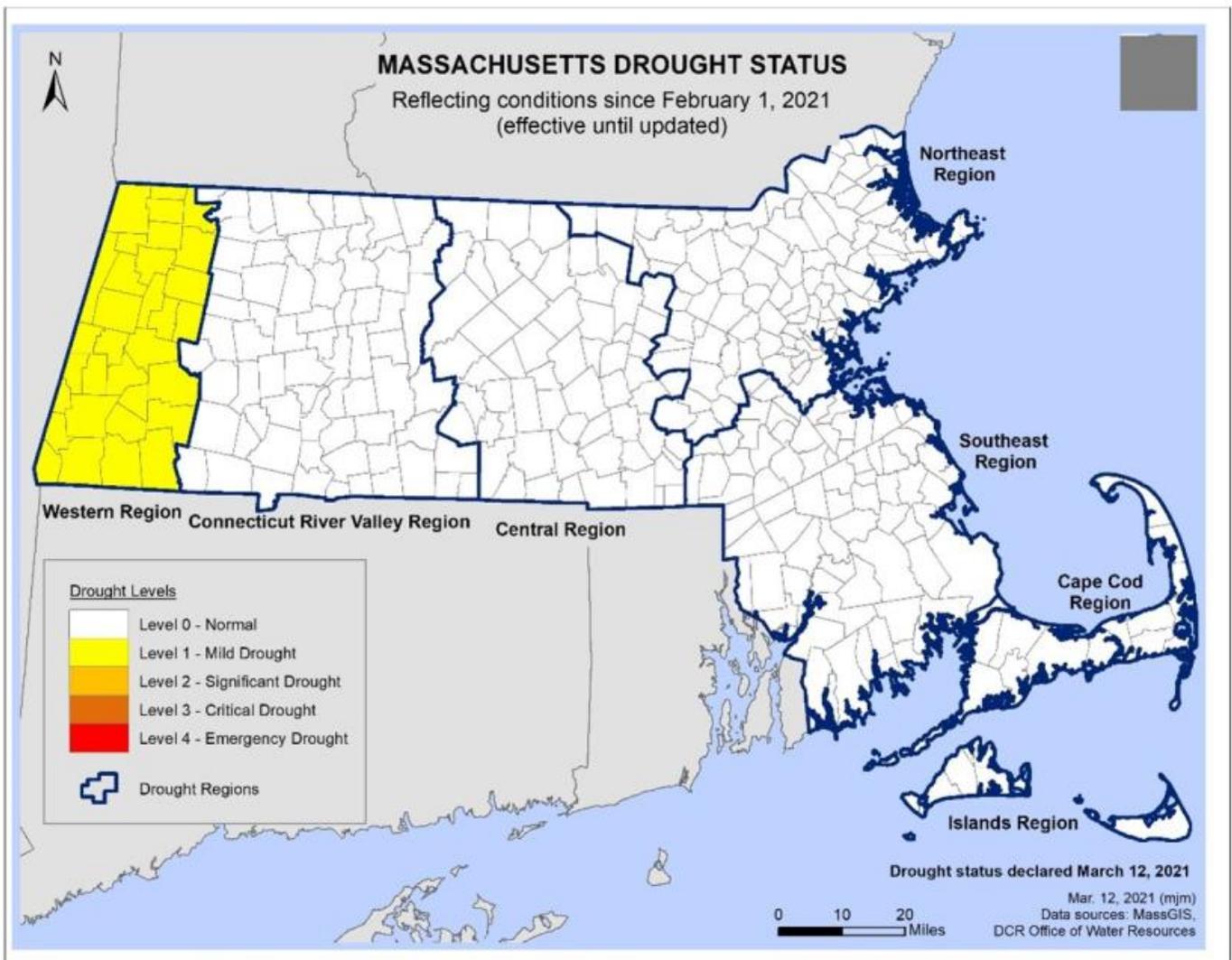
Craig Gilvarg, Press Secretary

Phone

617-372-6704 (tel:6173726704)

Online

craig.gilvarg@mass.gov (mailto:craig.gilvarg@mass.gov)



BOSTON — Due to lower than normal precipitation, streamflow, and groundwater, Energy and Environmental Affairs Secretary today declared a Level 1-Mild Drought in the Western Region of the Commonwealth. All other regions of the state – Connecticut River Valley, Central, Northeast, Southeast, Cape Cod and Islands regions – remain in Level 0-Normal conditions. All seven regions were experiencing normal conditions last month. A Level 1-Mild Drought, as outlined in the [Massachusetts Drought Management Plan](/files/documents/2019/10/03/drought-plan.pdf) (</files/documents/2019/10/03/drought-plan.pdf>), warrants detailed monitoring of drought conditions, close coordination among state and federal agencies, and technical outreach and assistance to the affected municipalities.

“While the Commonwealth made great progress in its response to a drought period over the summer and fall of 2020, current dry conditions in the Western region emphasize the ongoing need to conserve our water resources and minimize the strain on our local water supplies,” said **Energy and Environmental Affairs Secretary Kathleen Theoharides**. “We will continue to monitor conditions and we encourage all residents and businesses in the Western region to minimize water use and be mindful of outdoor plantings and watering as the Commonwealth heads into the spring growing season.”

The declaration was informed by recommendations and discussions from the March 10, 2020 meeting of the [Drought Management Task Force](/orgs/drought-management-task-force) (</orgs/drought-management-task-force>) (DMTF), composed of state and

federal officials and other entities, and will remain in effect until water levels return to normal in the affected regions.

Precipitation throughout February was the lowest across the western half of Massachusetts, as well as in extreme north central and northeast regions. In the Connecticut River Valley and the eastern slopes of the Berkshires, precipitation was 75 percent below normal. Streamflow and groundwater were also below normal in the Western region, while conditions were normal in other regions of the state. The Task Force noted that snowpack in the Western region may factor into indices and snow melt may ease conditions in the coming weeks as the weather continues to warm. Also, of note is the Housatonic River watershed which has started to experience dryer conditions than the rest of the western region.

The Commonwealth continues to monitor and assess the drought situation, and any associated environmental and agricultural impacts. State officials ask the public to be mindful of the amount of water they are using, residents are asked to reduce indoor water use, address leaks as soon as possible, and for larger buildings and businesses to conduct water audits to identify areas of leaks and potential water conservation. As we head into the spring months, we ask residents and businesses to be mindful of what they plant outdoor by planting drought tolerant and native species that use less water, minimize the size of their lawns, and harvest rainwater for outdoor watering. 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 sustain our water supplies and have enough for the environment.

For Region in Level 1 - Mild Drought

Residents and Businesses:

- Minimize overall water use

Communities:

- Establish a year-round water conservation program that includes public education and communication;
- Provide timely information to local residents and businesses;
- Check emergency inter-connections for water supply; and
- Develop a local drought management plan.

The Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection (MassDEP) will continue to provide technical assistance to communities on managing systems, including assistance on use of emergency connections and water supplies.

“We are watching drought conditions carefully,” **said MassDEP Commissioner Martin Suuberg.** “We will provide additional guidance moving forward as we assess conditions.”

The declaration of a Mild Drought means that the Drought Management Task Force will meet on Tuesday, April 6, 2021 from 9:30-11:30 a.m. State agencies will continue to closely monitor and assess conditions across the state, coordinate any needed dissemination of information to the public, and help state, federal and local agencies prepare additional responses that may be needed in the future. For further information on water

conservation and what residents can do, visit the Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs' [drought page](/guides/drought-management-in-massachusetts) and [water conservation](/conservemawater) page.

In 2019, EEA completed a two-year process and updated the [Massachusetts Drought Management Plan](/doc/massachusetts-drought-management-plan/download) to better assess drought conditions across the state and maximize the state's ability to prepare for and respond to a drought. The Plan also provides guidance to communities on drought preparedness and outlines response actions that can be taken at the local level.

###

Media Contact

Craig Gilvarg, Press Secretary

Phone

617-372-6704 (tel:6173726704)

Online

craig.gilvarg@mass.gov (mailto:craig.gilvarg@mass.gov)

Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs

[\(/orgs/executive-office-of-energy-and-environmental-affairs\)](/orgs/executive-office-of-energy-and-environmental-affairs)

EEA seeks to protect, preserve, and enhance the Commonwealth's environmental resources while ensuring a clean energy future for the state's residents. Through the stewardship of open space, protection of environmental resources, and enhancement of clean energy, the Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs works tirelessly to make Massachusetts a wonderful place to live, work, and raise a family.

[More](/orgs/executive-office-of-energy-and-environmental-affairs) (</orgs/executive-office-of-energy-and-environmental-affairs>)

Drought Management Task Force

[\(/orgs/drought-management-task-force\)](/orgs/drought-management-task-force)

The Drought Management Task Force (DMTF) chaired by the Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs and the Massachusetts Emergency Management Agency, consists of officials from state and federal agencies and professional organizations with responsibility for areas likely to be affected by drought conditions. It also includes representatives of agencies that provide data used to assess the severity of drought conditions or that have the ability to respond to drought conditions, and public health and safety professionals.

[More \(/orgs/drought-management-task-force\)](/orgs/drought-management-task-force)



Massachusetts Emergency Management Agency

[\(/orgs/massachusetts-emergency-management-agency\)](/orgs/massachusetts-emergency-management-agency)

Massachusetts Emergency Management Agency ensures the state is prepared to withstand, respond to and recover from all types of emergencies and disasters.

[More \(/orgs/massachusetts-emergency-management-agency\)](/orgs/massachusetts-emergency-management-agency)

Water Resources Commission [\(/orgs/water-resources-commission\)](/orgs/water-resources-commission)

The Water Resources Commission was established in 1956 by the Massachusetts Legislature and is responsible for developing, coordinating, and overseeing the Commonwealth's water policy and planning activities to ensure that Massachusetts will have plentiful water to support health, safety, economic development, and ecological vitality for generations to come.

The twelve-seat Commission includes appointees from seven state agencies or offices and five public members.

[More \(/orgs/water-resources-commission\)](/orgs/water-resources-commission)