



# *ENVIRONMENTAL NEWS*

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## ***DRY CONDITIONS LEAD TO EXPANDED 'DROUGHT WATCH' DECLARATIONS***

Drought watch advisories issued for two additional regions;  
Appomattox advisory expanded to include all of Middle James region

**RICHMOND, VA.** – Lack of rainfall, along with continued low ground water levels and stream flows, have caused drought impacts in the James River and New River basins in central and western Virginia.

In response to these conditions and to increase public awareness of the potential for a significant drought event, the Virginia Department of Environmental Quality has issued “drought watch” advisories for the Upper James River basin and the New River basin regions, and extended the existing advisory for the Appomattox River basin to include the entire Middle James River region.

A drought watch advisory remains in effect for the Roanoke River basin.

DEQ is sending notifications to all local governments, public water works, and private-sector water users in the affected areas.

The affected localities and water suppliers for the Upper James River basin drought watch include the counties of Alleghany, Bath, Botetourt, Craig and Rockbridge; the cities of Buena Vista, Covington and Lexington; and the towns of Clifton Forge, Fincastle, Iron Gate, New Castle and Troutville.

The affected localities and water suppliers for the New River basin drought watch include the counties of Bland, Carroll, Floyd, Giles, Grayson, Montgomery, Pulaski and Wythe; the cities of Galax and Radford; and the towns of Blacksburg, Christiansburg, Dublin, Floyd, Fries, Glen Lyn, Hillsville, Independence, Narrows, Pearisburg, Pembroke, Pulaski, Rich Creek, Rural Retreat, Troutdale and Wytheville.

The affected localities and water suppliers for the Middle James basin drought watch (in addition to the Appomattox River basin) include portions of Appomattox, Buckingham, Chesterfield, Cumberland and Powhatan counties; all of Albemarle, Amherst, Fluvanna, Goochland, Hanover, Henrico and Nelson counties; the cities of Charlottesville, Lynchburg and

Richmond; and the towns of Amherst, Ashland, Columbia, Dillwyn, Pamplin City and Scottsville.

The drought watch advisories have been expanded because conditions identified in the state's Drought Assessment and Response Plan have declined. According to the Virginia Drought Monitoring Task Force, a group representing state and federal agencies, the main factors contributing to the expansion include:

- Precipitation amounts since October 1 have totaled less than 55 percent of the normal amounts expected for this time of year.
- Stream flow has dropped to levels between 90 percent and 75 percent less than recorded flows in the Upper James and New River regions and to levels between 95 percent and 90 percent less than recorded flows in the Middle James region.
- Ground water levels remain less than 75 percent to 90 percent of previously recorded levels in all three regions.
- Levels at several water supply and hydroelectric reservoirs have dropped to stages requiring drought response actions.
- Precipitation, stream flows and ground water levels continued to decline throughout November, during a time when rebounds normally occur.

Localities, public water suppliers and self-supplied water users in the James River and New River basins are encouraged to continue to voluntarily take these steps to protect current water supplies:

- Minimize nonessential water use.
- Review existing or develop new local water conservation and drought contingency plans, and take conservation actions consistent with those plans.
- Include water conservation information on local websites and distribute water conservation information as broadly as possible.
- Continue monitoring the condition of public waterworks and self-supplied water systems in partnership with the Virginia Department of Health.
- Impose water use restrictions when consistent with local water supply conditions.
- Aggressively pursue leak detection and repair programs.

More information on water supply status statewide is available on the DEQ website at [www.deq.virginia.gov](http://www.deq.virginia.gov).

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