

Is Your Water System Prepared for Drought Conditions?

By Randy Hellbusch, Circuit Rider

If you have been paying attention to the weather experts, many are saying that parts of Nebraska may be headed for another dry year. Regardless of what actually happens it is always best to be prepared. If your water system has not yet done so it may be a good time to set some parameters for if a drought does happen to occur. It is always a good idea to have baselines or triggers set so that the public knows at what point restrictions or conservation practices will take place. This way it isn't just because the water operator or someone thinks it is a good idea. Below is a good example of some ways to determine if and when it is time to declare a water watch or a water warning. If you would like some assistance in writing a drought ordinance or conservation plan give us a call at NeRWA. We would be happy to assist.

Declaration of a Water Watch, Warning or Emergency.

A water watch, warning or emergency shall be in effect whenever the water superintendent finds that conditions indicate the probability of a drought or some other condition causing a major water supply shortage is rising. The water superintendent shall be empowered to declare that a water watch, warning or emergency exists and shall take steps to inform the public and ask for reductions in water use. Such watch, warning or emergency shall be deemed to continue until it is declared to have ended. Declaring the existence and end of a water watch, warning or emergency shall be effective upon posting notice at the Village's designated areas.

A. Declaring a Water Watch:

Triggers. This stage is triggered by any one of the following conditions:

1. Groundwater levels have fallen ___ feet below the normal seasonal level.
2. Pumping lowers water levels to within ___ feet of the top of the well screens.
3. Demand for one day is in excess of _____ gallons per day.
4. Drought conditions exist.

(Other triggers could be days over a certain temperature, wells run over a set number of hours/day, inability to maintain adequate storage.)

Goals

The goals of this stage are to heighten awareness of the public on water conditions and to maintain the integrity of the water supply system.

Education Actions

The Village will make occasional news releases or post notices.

B. Declaring a Water Warning:

Triggers. This stage is triggered by any of the following conditions:

1. Groundwater levels have fallen ____ feet below the normal seasonal level.
2. Pumping lowers water levels to within ____ feet of the top of the well screens.
3. Demand for one day is in excess of _____gallons per day.
4. Loss of water tower and or well.

Goals

The goals of this stage are to reduce peak demands by 20% and to reduce overall weekly consumption by 10%.