



Commonwealth of Massachusetts

Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs

Department of Environmental Protection

Address: 100 Cambridge Street, Suite 900, Boston MA 02114 | Phone: 617-292-5500

Maura T. Healey
Governor

Kim Driscoll
Lieutenant Governor

Rebecca Tepper
Secretary

Bonnie Heiple
Commissioner

March 17, 2026

RE: Drought Conditions Worsen Across Massachusetts as Spring Arrives

Dear Water Management Act (WMA) Registrants and Permittees:

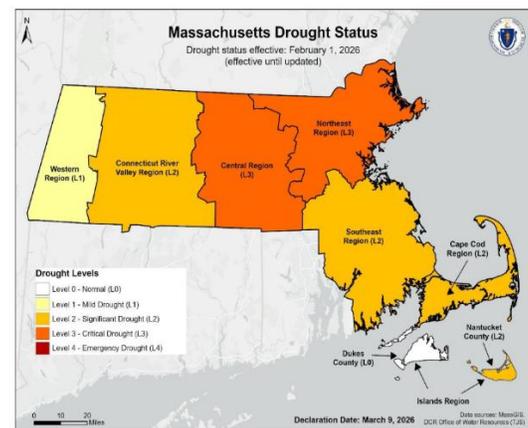
On March 9, 2026, Secretary of Energy and Environmental Affairs Rebecca Tepper declared:

Level 3 – Critical Drought in the Central and Northeast Drought Regions

Level 2 – Significant Drought in the Connecticut River Valley, Southeast and Cape Cod Drought Regions, and Nantucket County

Level 1 – Mild Drought in the Western Drought Region

Level 0 – Normal Conditions are found in only Dukes County (Martha's Vineyard & Elizabeth Islands)



Although Massachusetts received up to three feet of snow in February, most of that water has been locked in snow because February temperatures stayed well below freezing and the ground has been frozen. Even as it melts, the three feet of snow equals only about two and a half inches of water, which is not enough to fully recharge rivers, lakes, ponds, and groundwater after months of below-average precipitation and nearly two years of substantial water deficits. We all hope for upcoming spring rains that will start to slowly replenish water systems throughout Massachusetts.

Now that the irrigation season is fast approaching, we remind all water users to evaluate the requirements of their WMA Registration(s) and/or Permit(s) and advise you to prepare to implement the required restrictions as appropriate. And a reminder that if you hold both a registration and a permit that includes seasonal restrictions on nonessential outdoor water use, then the restrictions required in your permit are controlling.

Many WMA Permits allow permittees to trigger restrictions in one of two ways:

- **Calendar triggered restrictions** are in place from May 1st through September 30th. Many public water suppliers find this option easier to implement and enforce than the streamflow triggered approach.

- **Streamflow triggered restrictions** are implemented at those times when streamflow falls below designated flow triggers measured at an assigned U.S. Geologic Survey (USGS) stream gage from May 1st through September 30th.

Please be advised that the USGS water data website is undergoing modernization with expected decommissioning of the legacy pages as a key change to the modernized website. This means that the links in your WMA Permit for accessing USGS streamflow data may no longer work and may change in the coming months.

MassDEP is preparing interim guidance for accessing your streamflow gage data. The interim guidance is expected to be posted to the [MassDEP Outdoor Water Use Restrictions for Cities, Towns, and Golf Courses](#) webpage by Mid-April and updated over the course of the irrigation season.

- Any time **Public Water Suppliers (PWS) impose mandatory outdoor water use restrictions, they are required to notify MassDEP, per 310 CMR 22.15(8)**. PWSs that impose **voluntary** outdoor water use restrictions are asked to notify MassDEP as well. A MassDEP Notification of Water Use Restriction form can be found at <https://www.mass.gov/info-details/outdoor-water-use-restrictions-for-cities-towns-and-golf-courses#current-city-and-town-water-restrictions->.

Please send completed form to DEP.WMA@mass.gov (preferred) or by US Mail to Mass DEP Water Management Program, 100 Cambridge Street, Suite 900, Boston, MA 02114. If you have any questions or concerns, please contact Brittany Segill at brittany.segill@mass.gov.

- **Golf Course Registrants are required to notify MassDEP when their Seasonal Demand Management Plan (SDMP) or other required restrictions are put in place. Permitted golf course operators** should review their permit conditions to see whether the implementation of their SDMP requires that MassDEP be notified as well. The Notification of Water Use Restriction form for golf courses can be found at <https://www.mass.gov/info-details/outdoor-water-use-restrictions-for-cities-towns-and-golf-courses>.

Please send completed forms to DEP.WMA@mass.gov (preferred) or by US Mail to Mass DEP Water Management Program, 100 Cambridge Street, Suite 900, Boston, MA 02114. If you have any questions or concerns, please contact Linjun Yao at linjun.yao@mass.gov.

In the meantime, MassDEP continues to encourage both indoor and outdoor water conservation efforts at this time. For PWSs, outreach to your community alerting them of drought conditions in your region and providing information on conservation is an important way to promote conservation. This letter includes a drought map and conservation guidance for PWS customers that suppliers can post to their website.

Very truly yours,



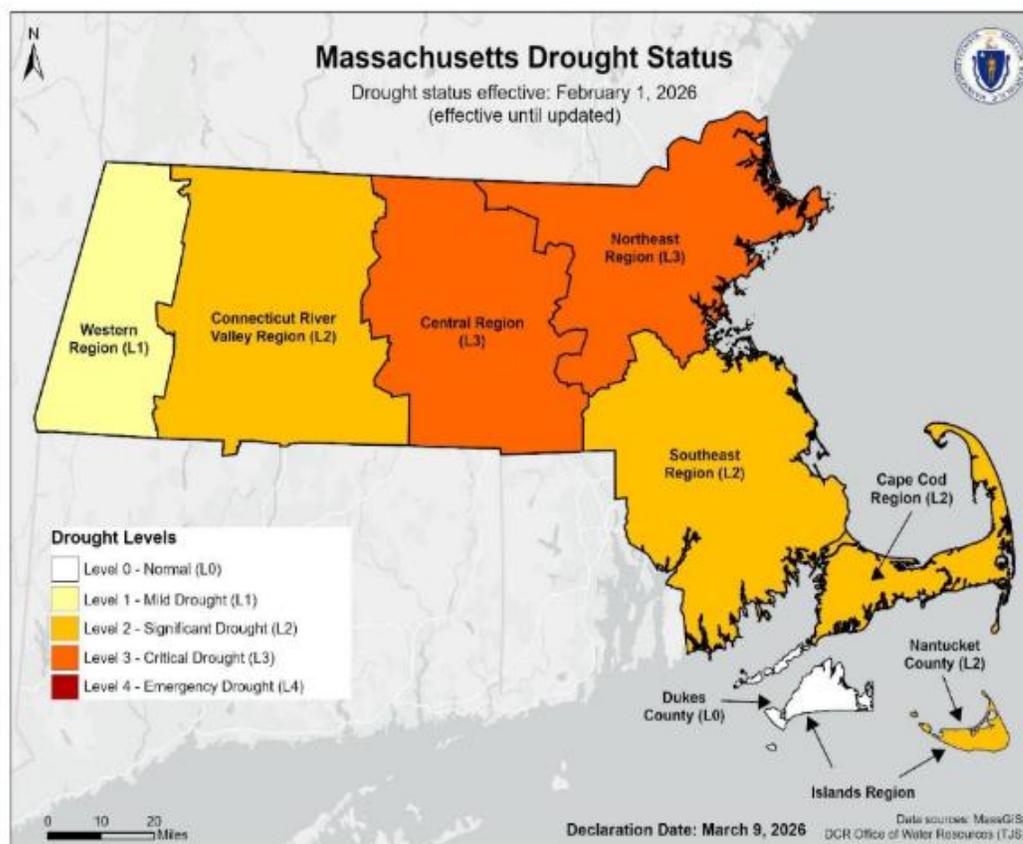
Kathleen Baskin, Assistant Commissioner,
Bureau of Water Resources

Cc: Duane LeVangie, WMA Program Chief, DEP Boston (617-780-1962)
Melissa Dwinell, Drinking Water Chief, DEP NERO (857-278-5348)
Sean Nugent, Drinking Water Chief, DEP CERO (413-361-8794)
Jim McLaughlin, Drinking Water Chief, DEP SERO (857-260-1002)
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Vandana Rao, EOEEA
Anne Carroll, DCR OWR
Jennifer Pederson, MWWA
Steve Estes-Smargiassi, MWRA
Lydia Olson, Mass Rivers Alliance
Andrew Gottlieb, Association to Preserve Cape Cod

Water Conservation Guidance

Drought Conditions Worsen Across Massachusetts as Spring Arrives

During the persistent drought, MassDEP encourages both indoor and outdoor water conservation efforts.



Outdoor Water Conservation

Level 3 (Critical Drought): All nonessential outdoor water uses banned

Level 2 (Significant Drought): All nonessential outdoor water uses banned, except that watering ornamentals and flower gardens with drip irrigation, hand-held hose or watering cans may be permitted.

Level 1 (Mild Drought): All nonessential outdoor water use restricted to one day per week, before 9 a.m. and after 5 p.m., except that watering ornamentals and flower gardens with hand-held hose, drip irrigation, or watering cans may be permitted.

Indoor Water Conservation

- The USEPA WaterSense program offers useful information on water conservation at www.epa.gov/watersense/.
- A link to the Massachusetts “Water Conservation Standards” developed jointly by the Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs and the Water Resources Commission is at <https://www.mass.gov/massachusetts-water-conservation-standards>.