

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: October 28, 2020

For more information: contact Mark H. Robinson, Cotuit Water Commissioner, mark@thecompact.net or Chris Wiseman, Water Superintendent, 508-428-2687

The Cotuit Water Commission alerts Cotuit water customers that our village is in a **Significant Drought**, as is all of Cape Cod. All customers are requested to be mindful of unnecessary or less urgent water use, especially for car or boat washing, pool filling, and new landscaping. Lawn-watering should be limited to once per week.

Summer months always bring a surge in water use in Cotuit, owing to the increased seasonal population and the increased water volumes related to irrigation. In the past three months (July-September), the Water Department has recorded an average of an extra 35 million gallons more of pumping per month compared to the winter months (42 m versus 7 m). This increase is also more than 23 percent than during the same period in the summer of 2019. Our Water Superintendent reports that the water level in the wells is now two feet lower than what it should be under normal pumping conditions. While we are not at a critical stage, he has expressed concern.

Drought conditions also have impacts on wildlife and wetlands, drying out our swamps and streams and lowering pond levels and oxygenation. Increased pumping of our Department wells not only causes stress on the Cotuit water supply, but also exacerbates the drawdown of water in our wetlands. See attached photographs of dried up pond and stream in the wellfield.

The Cotuit Water Commission believes that irrigation accounts for most of the summer increase in water use. We have extended the moratorium on the installation of new lawn irrigation systems until next spring and will be reviewing policies to limit irrigation use in general.

The Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection (MassDEP) states that "At a Level 2 – Significant Drought, conditions are becoming significantly dry and warrant detailed monitoring of drought conditions, close coordination among state and federal agencies, emphasis on water conservation, more stringent watering restrictions, and technical outreach and assistance for the affected municipalities."

For Regions in Level 2 – Significant Drought

Residents and Businesses:

- Minimize overall water use;
- Limit outdoor watering to hand-held hoses or watering cans, to be used only after 5 p.m. or before 9 a.m. one day a week.
- Follow local water use restrictions.

Immediate Steps for Communities:

- Adopt and implement the state's nonessential outdoor water use restrictions for drought; Level 2 restriction calls for limiting outdoor watering to hand-held hoses or watering cans, to be used only after 5 p.m. or before 9 a.m. If local restrictions are more stringent, continue to keep them in place during the course of the drought.

- Limit or prohibit installation of new sod, seeding, and/or landscaping; watering during or within 48 hours after measurable rainfall; washing of hard surfaces (sidewalks, patios, driveways, siding); personal vehicle or boat washing; operation of non-recirculating fountains; filling of swimming pools, hot tubs, and backyard informal rinks.
- Implement drought surcharge or seasonal water rates.
- Establish water-use reduction targets for all water users and identify top water users and conduct targeted outreach to help curb their use.

Source: <https://www.mass.gov/news/critical-drought-conditions-declared-in-southeast-region-of-commonwealth>

See also: <https://m.facebook.com/bcrepc/?tsid=0.06599103245697541&source=result>



**Sampsons Mill Pond
drawn down and dried
up in Cotuit Wellfield,
25 October 2020**

*Photos: M.H. Robinson,
Cotuit Water Comm.*

**Little River, looking downstream from
Sampsons Mill Road crossing near Cotuit
Wellfield, Oct 2020 (left) and Feb 2020 (right)**

