

Houston County Declared 1 of 103 Counties under the EPD Level 1 Drought Response, Encourages Water Conservation

As of October 18, 2019 persistent dry conditions have prompted the Georgia Environmental Protection Division (EPD) to declare a Level 1 Drought Response in 103 counties. A Level 1 Drought Response declaration means local water utilities in the affected counties (see list below) will be required to begin a public information campaign to help citizens better understand drought, its impact on water supplies, and the need for water conservation.

According to the federal government's U.S. Drought Monitor, <https://droughtmonitor.unl.edu/CurrentMap/StateDroughtMonitor.aspx?GA> the drought has affected the entire state with conditions ranging from abnormally dry to extreme drought. As a result, most of the counties in Georgia must follow the Level 1 Drought Response requirements.

"This serves as a reminder for all Georgians to use water wisely," said EPD Director Richard Dunn. "It also gives public water systems an opportunity to educate their customers on the importance of water conservation."

To determine the appropriate level of drought response, EPD considers several factors including precipitation, stream flows, groundwater, reservoir levels, short-term climate predictions and soil moisture. EPD monitors and produces publicly available reports on these conditions on a monthly basis.

"The current flash drought we are in is primarily agricultural, but it can also affect water supply," said state climatologist Bill Murphey. "It came on quickly due to the intense daytime heating, lack of rainfall and sudden decrease in soil moisture we experienced in September."

"This year has seen very high-water usage in all of Houston County. So far this year we have pumped 4,485,941,000 total gallons of water through the month of September" says Houston County Utilities Manager Jeff Chandler.

There are many things that we do not think about that can assist in cutting back and saving water. Such things as not allowing water to run while brushing teeth, water

hoses not running while washing vehicles, repair leaky faucets (a faucet leaking 1 drop per second will use 9 gallons of water per day), washing dishes only when there is a full load, repairing leaky toilets and many other ideas. The following link will provide you with an extensive list of water saving tips, <https://epd.georgia.gov/watershed-protection-branch/water-conservation>

In addition, the outdoor water use schedule required under the Water Stewardship Act of 2010 remains in place statewide. This schedule allows outdoor water use year-round between 4 p.m. and 10 a.m. However, there are several exceptions, such as new plantings listed at <http://epd.georgia.gov/water-conservation>.

The Level 1 Drought impacts the following counties: Appling, Athens-Clarke, Bacon, Baldwin, Banks, Barrow, Bartow, Bibb, Bleckley, Brooks, Bryan, Bulloch, Burke, Butts, Carroll, Charlton, Chatham, Cherokee, Clayton, Clinch, Cobb, Coweta, Crawford, Crisp, Dawson, Decatur, DeKalb, Dooly, Douglas, Echols, Effingham, Fannin, Fayette, Forsyth, Franklin, Fulton, Gilmer, Gordon, Grady, Greene, Gwinnett, Habersham, Hall, Hancock, Haralson, Harris, Heard, Henry, Houston, Jackson, Jasper, Jenkins, Johnson, Jones, Lamar, Laurens, Lee, Liberty, Long, Lowndes, Lumpkin, Macon, Marion, McIntosh, Meriwether, Monroe, Morgan, Murray, Newton, Oconee, Paulding, Peach, Pickens, Pierce, Pike, Polk, Pulaski, Putnam, Rabun, Rockdale, Schley, Screven, Seminole, Spalding, Stephens, Sumter, Talbot, Taylor, Thomas, Tift, Towns, Troop, Turner, Twiggs, Union, Upson, Walton, Ware, Washington, Wayne, White, Wilkinson and Worth counties.

For more information, please contact Jeff Chandler at 478-542-2120.