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## Press Release



### For Immediate Release

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### Governor Hassan, State Agencies Working with Local Communities to Address Drought

*NHDES Recommends that All New Hampshire Communities Place Mandatory Restrictions on Outdoor Water Use, Governor Continues to Urge All Granite Staters to Conserve Water*

*Also Today, Additional New Hampshire Counties Receive Secretarial Drought Disaster Designation from U.S. Department of Agriculture*

CONCORD – Continuing her efforts to respond to the current drought and to encourage the conservation of water, Governor Maggie Hassan and state agencies today held a conference call with local communities on collaborative efforts to address the drought.

During the conference call, Governor Hassan encouraged all Granite Staters – including those on both private wells and public water systems, as well as those outside of the currently designated drought areas – to take steps to conserve water. In addition, the New Hampshire Department of Environmental Services (NHDES) recommended that all New Hampshire communities place mandatory restrictions on outdoor water use for both public and private wells.

“Reliable access to water is critical to public health, public safety and our economy,” Governor Hassan said. “The severe-to-extreme drought is threatening water levels and reserves across the state, and we must work together to strengthen conservation efforts. It is an important time of year for re-charging our water systems, and if the drought continues, more of our citizens could see their wells run dry this winter. At this time, water conservation is critical to extending the life of private wells and public water systems throughout the state, and I urge all Granite Staters to take steps to conserve water, including those who live outside of currently designated drought areas.”

“The drought is a slow moving natural disaster. We’ve been experiencing two years of well below average precipitation. A storm or two will not be drought busters. The experts are telling us that we will need significant and sustained precipitation events throughout this fall and a snowy winter to recharge our groundwater. It’s critical to conserve water now so we’ll all have water throughout the winter,” noted NHDES Commissioner Tom Burack.

Over the summer, the Governor directed the Department of Administrative Services to reduce water usage in state government, including eliminating outdoor watering with the exceptions of the State Veterans’ Cemetery, the New Hampshire Law Enforcement Memorial, and the New Hampshire Firefighters Memorial, as well as limited nighttime watering at the State House.

Also today, U.S. Department of Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack granted a Secretarial Drought Disaster Designation for additional New Hampshire counties. Grafton County was designated as a primary natural disaster area and Coos County was added to New Hampshire’s contiguous disaster counties.

“The negative impacts of the drought are far-reaching and already affecting our state,” Governor Hassan said. “It has threatened farms across the state – including dairy farms, whose other challenges have been compounded by the drought – causing a negative ripple effect for businesses across the state. The additional federal drought disaster designation is welcome news, but we know that more must be done at the federal and state levels to support our agriculture industry, which is critical to our state, during this emergency situation.”

Cheshire, Hillsborough, Merrimack, Rockingham and Strafford counties were previously designated as primary

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natural disaster areas, and Belknap, Grafton and Sullivan counties had also already been designated as contiguous disaster counties. Farm operators in all ten New Hampshire counties are eligible to apply for federal assistance, including Farm Service Agency (FSA) emergency loans.

Earlier this week, [Governor Hassan visited Great Bay Farm in Greenland](#) for a discussion with farmers and others in the agricultural industry about addressing the impacts of the drought. Among other items, the Governor discussed efforts to allocate funding for the Milk Producers Emergency Relief Fund and her support for changes to the federal Dairy Margin Protection Program that would calculate feed costs at a regional level instead of the current national level.

Today's announcement follows [several previous Secretarial Drought Disaster Designations that have been recently granted](#), as well as [Governor Hassan's original request for a disaster declaration in early August](#). In addition, New Hampshire has received a [natural disaster designation for farmers of perennial fruit crops in all 10 counties](#) responding to crop losses due to extreme cold in February and again in early April.

For information and resources regarding the State of New Hampshire's Drought Management Program and Drought Management Team, visit [des.nh.gov/organization/divisions/water/dam/drought/](https://des.nh.gov/organization/divisions/water/dam/drought/).

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