

Houston County Declared 1 of 53 Counties under the EPD Level 1 Drought Response, Encourages Water Conservation

As of September 9, 2016 persistent dry conditions have prompted the Georgia Environmental Protection Division (EPD) to declare a Level 1 Drought Response in 53 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, varying degrees of drought impact about two-thirds of the state. Nearly all of the counties affected by the Level 1 Drought Response declaration are experiencing severe and extreme drought conditions.

"Water utilities have already taken action to insure that water supplies are generally good and practicing effective water conservation that will help provide sufficient supplies through the coming months if dry conditions persist," said EPD Director Richard Dunn.

"This year has seen very high water usage in all of Houston County but the Bonaire and Kathleen areas have seen the most usage," says Houston County Utilities Manager Jeff Chandler. "So far this year we have pumped over 3,497,496,000 total gallons of water through the month of August. The Bonaire and Kathleen areas have accounted for 2,019,810,000 gallons. We located electronic sign boards in the areas most impacted, asking residents to cut back on their watering schedule. The residents did a good job in complying with our requests," says Utility 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, and many other ideas. The following link will provide you with an extensive list of water saving tips, <http://spock.fcs.uga.edu/ext/pubs/hace/HACE-E-69.pdf>

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: Banks, Barrow, Bartow, Butts, Carroll, Catoosa, Chattooga, Cherokee, Clarke, Clayton, Cobb, Coweta, Dade, Dawson, DeKalb, Douglas, Fannin, Fayette, Floyd, Forsyth, Fulton, Gilmer, Gordon, Gwinnett, Habersham, Hall, Haralson, Harris, Heard, Henry, Houston, Jackson, Lamar, Lumpkin, Meriwether, Morgan, Murray, Newton, Oconee, Paulding, Pickens, Pike, Polk, Rockdale, Spalding, Troup, Twiggs, Union, Walker, Walton, White, Whitfield and Wilkinson.

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