Drought Contingency Planning in PA

DRBC | WMAC Meeting
June 3, 2026

JOSH SHAPIRO, GOVERNOR | JESSICA SHIRLEY, SECRETARY

Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection

Presented to an advisory committee of the DRBC on June 3, 2026. Contents should not be published or re-posted in whole or in part without the permission of the presenter and DRBC.

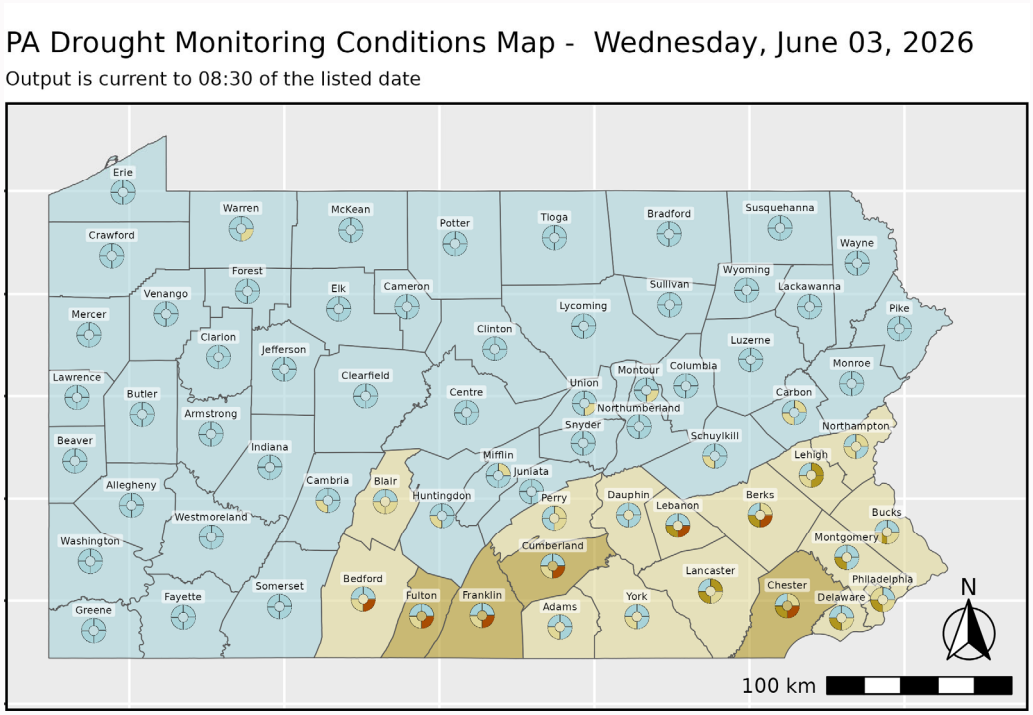
Pennsylvania
Department of
Environmental Protection

Drought Contingency Plans

- Required as a Special Condition in Allocations Permits for Public Water Suppliers
- Drought Contingency Plans are Required from:
    - Public Water Suppliers > 50 Connections
    - Self Supplied Commercial and Industrial > 100,000 gpd
    - O&G water management plans
- Contain a staged plan to reduce water usage
- Must be reviewed and submitted every three years
- Implemented within Designated Drought Emergency Areas

Pennsylvania
Department of
Environmental Protection

Drought Management in PA



- Three Distinct Phases (Watch, Warning, Emergency)
- Watch and Warning are *Informational* and decided by the Commonwealth Drought Coordinator with advice from the Drought Task Force
- Decisions are made by looking at several indices
- Emergencies are declared by the Governor and are mandatory and enforceable

Source: USGS PA Drought Monitoring: https://pa.water.usgs.gov/apps/drought/

Pennsylvania
Department of
Environmental Protection

When to Submit

- Public Water Suppliers (>50 connections)
  - Submitted with Permit with Special Condition
  - Required in Designated Drought Emergency Areas (regardless of permit conditions)
- Self-Supplied Industrial and Commercial
  - >100,000 gpd kept on site
  - >500,000 gpd submitted to DEP
  - Required in Designated Drought Emergency Areas
- Oil and Gas Water Management Plans
  - DCP Required for Bulk Water Seller Required if Special Condition is Present, Recommended if Not

Pennsylvania
Department of
Environmental Protection

What to Submit: PWS

- Contact Information
- Description of Sources
- Data –
  - Monthly average and peak withdrawal from each source for each calendar month
  - Monthly average and peak day rates of water use during each month
- Triggering Criteria for Drought Onset
- Staged Plan of Action
- Procedure for Granting Variances or Exemptions
- Submissions taken via DEA, templates and checklists are provided

Pennsylvania
Department of
Environmental Protection

What to Submit: Industrial/Commercial

- Contact Information
- Description of Sources
- Description of Water Related Processes
- Data:
    - Monthly average and peak day withdrawal and use
    - Consumptive water use at facility
- Description of Wastewater Practices
- Description of Measures used previously and impacts on production, employment, and economics of the facility.
- Phased Plan of Actions seeking to reduce water withdrawals by 5%, 15%, 25%, 35%, and 50%

Pennsylvania
Department of
Environmental Protection

Who is Submitting?

- About 20% of eligible public water suppliers have approved DCPs (194/~1,000)
- No Industrial or Commercial Users have submitted

Pennsylvania
Department of
Environmental Protection

Designated Drought Emergency Areas

- Governor Declares
- Current DCP Required (both for eligible PWS and Industrial/Commercial)
- Implementation Mandated
- Local Water Rationing Becomes Possible
- Non-Essential Uses Restricted (included in Chapter 119)
    - Exemptions and Variances may be granted by Commonwealth Drought Coordinator

Pennsylvania
Department of
Environmental Protection

Get In Touch

James Horton
Bureau of Safe Drinking Water
400 Market Street
Harrisburg, PA 17101
…
717 772 1100 / jahorton@pa.gov

The Department of Environmental Protection's mission is to protect Pennsylvania's air, land and water resources and to provide for the health and safety of its residents and visitors, consistent with the rights and duties established under the Environmental Rights Amendment (Article 1, Section 27 of the Pennsylvania Constitution).