

**SUSQUEHANNA RIVER BASIN COMMISSION**  
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**SRBC DROUGHT COORDINATION COMMITTEE CONVENES,  
WATER CHALLENGES EXPECTED IN LOWER SUSQUEHANNA REGION  
IF RAINFALL DEFICITS CONTINUE**

HARRISBURG, Pa. – The Susquehanna River Basin Commission (SRBC) this week convened its interagency Drought Coordination Committee to assess growing impacts to water resources in the Susquehanna basin due to ongoing precipitation shortfalls. Three consecutive months of shortfalls have caused streams and groundwater levels to drop well below normal for this time of the year, particularly in the Lower Susquehanna region in Pennsylvania and Maryland.

The Drought Coordination Committee assesses five main parameters to determine emerging drought conditions: precipitation deficits, stream flows, groundwater levels, soil moisture and water-supply reservoir levels. Precipitation deficits in the most impacted counties in Pennsylvania and Maryland range from 4 to 6 inches below normal for the past 90 days.

“SRBC and other water management agencies are especially concerned about unseasonably low groundwater levels,” said SRBC Executive Director Paul Swartz. “We are fast approaching the time of the year when groundwater recharge naturally ceases. If we don’t get sufficient amounts of rain in the coming weeks, levels will continue to drop. This means residents and businesses dependent on groundwater sources will have to rely on already-diminished supplies to get them through summer and late fall, when groundwater recharge normally picks up again.”

The interagency committee is coordinated by SRBC and includes representatives of water management agencies from the federal government and the states of Pennsylvania, Maryland and New York. Committee members exchange technical information, assess current hydrologic conditions throughout the Susquehanna basin and offer management recommendations as appropriate.

While NOAA’s National Weather Service is predicting slightly above normal rainfall in the early days of April, it will not be sufficient to address existing deficits. Committee members will continue reassessing conditions and communicating over the coming weeks.

If below normal precipitation persists through spring, there could be water challenges that impact domestic water supplies, agriculture and other water-dependent businesses, aquatic habitat, recreation and other activities.

Given the current stresses on water resources in the lower Susquehanna region, SRBC is encouraging water conservation. Water conservation tips for residential water users include:

- Repairing leaking toilets (a leaking toilet can lose up to 200 gallons per day);
- Repairing leaking and dripping facets (a leaking facet can lose up to 11 gallons per day);
- Installing new shower heads and sink faucets equipped with water saving devices, such as aerators or spray taps;
- Installing water saving appliances and devices, such as low-consumption toilets;
- Taking short showers instead of baths;
- Using dishwashers and washing machines only when filled to capacity;
- Not letting the water run continuously while shaving, brushing teeth or washing dishes by hand;

- Refrigerating tap water to avoid running the faucet waiting for the water to get cold;
- Sweeping sidewalks and driveways, not hosing them down; and
- Selecting more drought-tolerant vegetation and plant species for landscaping and using mulch to retain soil moisture.

Swartz said, “Without the return to a more normal precipitation pattern, we will undoubtedly experience water supply challenges and stresses on aquatic habitat later this year. This makes water conservation that much more urgent.”

For more water conservation tips and other hydrologic information, go to SRBC’s Drought Center at: [www.srbc.net/hydrologic/drought\\_center.htm](http://www.srbc.net/hydrologic/drought_center.htm). This site also contains the Susquehanna River Basin Drought Coordination Plan that details: (1) the three drought stages and their purposes – watch, warning and emergency; (2) the proper procedures for monitoring droughts, issuing drought declarations and responding to drought conditions in the Susquehanna basin; and (3) the drought management activities of each member state and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.

SRBC ([www.srbc.net](http://www.srbc.net)) is the governing agency established under a 100-year compact signed on December 24, 1970, by the federal government and the states of New York, Pennsylvania and Maryland to protect and wisely manage the water resources of the Susquehanna River Basin. The Susquehanna River starts in Cooperstown, N.Y., and flows 444 miles to the Chesapeake Bay at Havre de Grace, Md.

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