

Facts About Drought / Low Water Conditions!

What Is A Drought / Low Water Condition?

The Ministry of Natural Resources defines drought or a period of low water as an extended period of time with one or more of the following:

- Three months or more with below average precipitation; this may be combined with high rates of evaporation.
- Conditions in which the water levels in streams are at the minimum required for the survival of aquatic life. Water must be rationed only for high priority uses since many wells are becoming dry.
- Drought/low water conditions can have socioeconomic impacts that are felt over a much larger area than the individual properties that the drought/low water conditions have been reported at.

Negative impacts of drought/low water conditions may include:

- Water shortages and conservation measures for households, municipalities, industries, businesses and agriculture
- Increase in wildfires
- Decline in water quality
- Above average insect infestations and plant disease
- Impacts on shipping and marine transportation
- Reduced hydro-electric production
- Loss of fish and wildlife habitat
- Loss or damage of crops

Ontario Low Water Response Plan

The Ontario Low Water Response was developed by the Province of Ontario in order to assist in the preparation, co-ordination and to support local response to a drought.

MNR and the Conservation Authorities regularly monitor water level conditions. There are three levels use to describe water levels in regards to drought/low water in Ontario:

Level I: The potential for water supply problems is identified.

Level II: Minor water supply issues are encountered.

Level III: Supply no longer meets demand. Social and economic impacts are experienced.

For more information, visit the [Ministry of Natural Resources](#).

Tips For Conserving Water!

Conserving Water In Your Home:

- Never pour water down the drain when there may be another use for it. Use it to water your house or outdoor plants if it is free from soap or other products.
- Replace older toilets with low-flush models which use significantly less water per flush, only 13 litres per flush compared to 15 – 20 litres, or consider installing a toilet displacement device suitable for your toilet (Don't use a brick which can damage your toilet. Devices available at most hardware and home centers.).
- Only flush the toilet when necessary, don't use it to get rid of things like insects, or facial tissues which can be thrown in the garbage.
- Install a low-flow showerhead and try to keep your showers to around five minutes.
- Turn the water off while brushing your teeth or shaving.
- Consider purchasing water-saving appliances to replace less-efficient models.
- Only run the dishwasher or washing machine when you have a full load.
- Fix any leaks. One leak with a rate of one drop per second wastes more than 7.5 litres of water per year.
- You can place a bucket in the shower to help catch any extra water that can then be used to water plants.
- Fix any leaky or constantly running toilets.
- If you have a well, check your pump periodically. If the pump turns on and off while water is not being used, you likely have a leak.

Conserving Water Outdoors:

- Don't overwater your lawn and garden! Lawns only need about an inch of water per week and a heavy rainfall may decrease the need for watering your lawn for up to two weeks.
- Only use sprinklers that produce large droplets of water since those that produce a fine mist or spray the water high into the air lose a large amount of the water to evaporation.
- Less water is lost to evaporation and other factors when lawns are watered in the morning when temperatures and wind speeds are lower.
- Make sure the sprinkler only sprays the lawn and not the sidewalk.
- Check hoses for leaks and do not leave them running when they are not being used. In only a few hours, a running hose can pour out more than 2,000 litres.
- Use native and drought-resistant plants in your garden. There are many attractive ones that require less water and are also resistant to many plant diseases and pests.
- Adding peat or compost to the soil of your garden can help the soil to retain moisture.
- Consider taking your car to a car wash that recycles water or use a hose with a trigger nozzle and a bucket and sponge which uses approximately one quarter of the water than a constantly running hose.
- Keep your pool covered when it is not being used to minimize water loss from evaporation. Consider purchasing a water-saving pool filter.
- Get a rain barrel with a mosquito proof cover. This water can be used to water your lawn and garden.
- Don't use a hose to clean your driveway and sidewalk, use a broom instead.

Useful Resources!

Contact your local Conservation Authority

- [Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada \(2012\). Drought Watch](#)
- [MNR \(2010\). Ontario Low Water Response](#)
- [MNR Surface Water Monitoring Centre \(2012\). Low Water Conditions](#)
- [OMAFRA \(1999\). How to Prepare for Irrigation During Water Shortages](#)
- [OMAFRA \(1999\). Private Water Well Owners - Dealing With Water Shortages](#)