

Statewide drought watch in effect for New Jersey

By JACK FICHTER
Cape May Star and Wave

CAPE MAY — If you haven't been watering your petunias, they probably perished along with portions of your lawn. While we've had a few hit-or-miss showers, the area is in a drought watch.

State Commissioner of Environmental Protection Shawn M. LaTourette issued a statewide drought watch as of Aug. 9 and Gov. Phil Murphy's administration is urging residents and businesses to conserve water as persistent dry and hot conditions continue to stress supplies throughout the state.

LaTourette's declaration of a drought watch is the first in the state's three-stage drought advisory system. The watch is intended to sow public awareness and appreciation of the stress upon water supply sources and encourage voluntary

conservation measures. If conditions do not improve, declaration of a drought warning or a drought emergency with mandatory water use restrictions may become necessary. Voluntary conservation measures at the watch stage can help to avoid more serious and restrictive drought conditions.

"Stream flow and ground water levels are falling below normal for most of the state and some reservoirs are showing steep rates of decline as hot and dry conditions continue," LaTourette said. "While water conservation is always important, it becomes critical during prolonged dry and hot periods like New Jersey has been experiencing. If residents and businesses do all they can to reduce water demand, together we can ensure ample supplies in the coming weeks and months."

Cape May County, in

the coastal south zone, is classed as moderately dry.

At this time of year, more than 30 percent of water demand in suburban areas is for outdoor purposes, much of which can be reduced or eliminated. The public can make a big difference by reducing watering of lawns and landscaping, reducing the washing of vehicles and cutting back nonessential uses such as hosing off driveways and sidewalks, according to the Department of Environmental Protection.

The DEP is continuing to closely monitor drought indicators, which include precipitation, stream flows, reservoir levels, ground water levels, as well as water demand. The DEP will continue to inform the public, local governments and water systems of future actions to mitigate the risk of more severe conditions.

Mayor Zack Mullock

asked Cape May residents to read the city code covering lawn sprinkling.

"These days everybody has a controller for your water and sprinklers — make sure what you have it set to is to the code," he said, adding that code enforcement would be looking for violations.

"You do not want to be watering during the day and there's certain days if you're on one side of Madison Avenue or the other side of Madison Avenue," he said.

According to the city's water conservation regulations, watering of lawns, plants and gardens is prohibited between the hours of 10 a.m. and 6 p.m.

Between May 15 and Sept. 15, outdoor watering of lawns, plants and gardens is allowed before 10 a.m. and after 6 p.m. west of Madison Avenue on odd-numbered days and east of Madison

Avenue on even-numbered days.

No outdoor watering is allowed May 15 to Sept. 15 on Saturdays, Sundays or federal holidays.

Washing sidewalks and driveways by hose is prohibited, except in emergencies or circumstances specifically approved in advance by the superintendent. Automatic shut-off nozzles must be used on hoses used for outdoor washing (vehicles, boats, windows, etc.).

Washing cars is prohibited Saturdays, Sundays or federal holidays from May 15 to Sept. 15.

The water superintendent is authorized to determine the adequacy of rain sensor devices or switches that will override the automatic irrigation or sprinkler cycle of the system when adequate rainfall has occurred, and issue permits for their installation and use.

No irrigation or sprinkler system shall be permitted or installed unless it has an effective rain sensor device or switch.

All irrigation or sprinkler systems installed prior to the effective date of this article shall be modified not later than April 1, 1993, to include an effective rain sensor device or switch. Until such rain sensor device or switch is installed, owners of properties with irrigation or sprinkler systems shall arrange to manually override such systems when adequate rainfall has occurred.

Failure to comply with required water conservation measures shall be punishable by a fine of not less than \$50 for the first offense, \$100 for the second offense, and \$500 for the third and each additional offense. Each and every day that a violation exists shall constitute a separate violation.

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Jack Fichter/CAPE MAY STAR AND WAVE

Kiwanis Park in Cape May is going to get ADA-compliant upgrades.

Kiwanis Park

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The park has a picnic pavilion and would have a concrete path system around the park, Welsh said. A crosswalk would be installed on Madison Avenue with a handicap curb ramp.

More picnic tables would be installed, she said.

Welch said a landscaped entrance to the park would be created from Madison Avenue with a connection to a path around the pond and to parking and the nearby tennis courts.

Two swing sets would remain with a new accessible swing set to be installed, she said. A "connect seat" on the

swings would allow two persons to ride together on one swing and a "freedom seat" would offer full accessibility.

Two spring rockers would remain in the park, a frog and a dinosaur, which would be moved to create space for a new play structure, Welch said.

"This play structure is accessible not just to the able children and the disabled children but for all ages of children from two to 12 years old," she said.

The structure would have large and small slides and monkey bars with accessible access.

Welch said a rocker for those in wheelchairs

would be created as well as an inclusive orbit and spinner.

For children that may not want loud and exciting play, a clubhouse would be constructed on a side of the park, she said.

The park would also have a sensory stimulation board with items that move and items that make sounds when touched, Welch said.

A serenity spot would be created that may be enjoyable for children on the autism spectrum.

Welch said the park would have a handicap accessible restroom either of modular construction or one designed by an architect. The building would include a storage area.

She said a new asphalt sideline area would be constructed along the existing basketball courts with benches and a new fence along the pond to keep basketballs out of the water.

The park would have low level bollard lighting along its paths.

Some new trees and shrubs would be planted with some sensory stimulation gardens for children to touch and smell the plants, Welch said.

The park would use trees approved by the Shade Tree Commission but include trees not often seen such as shagbark hickory, bitternut hickory or American beech. She said trees would have informational tags including Braille for the sight impaired.

Welch said the park would be accessible, inclusive, sen-

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Cape May Point Science Center and Rutgers University

Rutgers University Scientists installed equipment in the CMP Science Center to measure the impact of climate change on the Atlantic Ocean off Cape May Point, NJ

The system's called Coastal Ocean Dynamic Application Radar (CODAR). High-tech rooms in the former Saint Mary's will provide for the latest technology to report the information back to the college campuses of participating universities.

Pictured in the photo is Ethan Handel, Research Project Coordinator at Rutgers University, Department of Marine and Coastal Sciences.

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