

Drought Response Status

Georgia's Environmental Protection Division declared a Level 1 drought response on Sept. 9, 2016 across 53 counties, including all 15 counties in the Metropolitan North Georgia Water Planning District (Metro Water District). This declaration requires water providers to educate the public about drought conditions and water conservation.

The declaration follows dry spring and summer. According to the National Weather Service, from March through August 2016, Atlanta received 16.59 inches of rain – about 8.5 inches less than the 30-year average for the same six-month period.

We don't know how long the dry weather will continue. Rainfall may return to normal, but we need to take reasonable measures to be responsible stewards of water and to be prepared for the possibility this is a long-term drought.

The state's permanent year-round outdoor watering restrictions limit outdoor watering to the hours between 4 p.m. and 10 a.m. to avoid the hottest part of the day when more evaporation occurs, with certain limited exceptions as set forth in the 2010 Georgia Water Stewardship Act.

Metro Water District Conservation Efforts

Our region has a robust track record of water conservation. Since its creation in 2001, the Metro Water District has implemented one of the most comprehensive regional water management plans in the country that mandates an array of conservation initiatives, including:

- A toilet rebate program that has replaced more than 110,000 old fixtures with high-efficient models, saving nearly a billion gallons of water a year
- A tiered pricing structure that charges higher rates the more water that is used, encouraging conservation
- Ordinances requiring all new drive-through car washes to recycle water, reducing water use per facility by 35 percent.

As a result of these and other practices, water use in the Metro Water District has dropped by more than 10 percent since 2001, despite a population increase of more than one million. In addition, water demand forecasts show that the region will use 25 percent less water in 2050 than was estimated as recently as 2009.

Meanwhile, water providers across the region have also found innovative ways to conserve our water supply. For example:

- **Cobb County**'s Inspect Direct Connect program encourages citizens and green industry professionals to inspect their irrigation systems for inefficiencies and leaks. If an issue is identified, the lawn is flagged and the owner is provided with resources to address and fix the problem.
- **DeKalb County** has a "retrofit-on-reconnect" requirement that requires older, inefficient toilets to be replaced upon reconnecting water service after a home sale.
- **Clayton County** has implemented a comprehensive, system-wide leak detection program, saving millions of gallons of treated potable water on an annual basis.
- **Fulton County** created the South Fulton Demonstration Garden, an approximately one-acre series of gardens with an outdoor classroom used for water-wise landscaping and environmental sustainability education programs.
- **Douglas County** conserves water and energy and maximizes storage in the Dog River Reservoir by reclaiming 6 million gallons of highly treated wastewater per day for cooling water usage in order to maximize the volume of water stored in the reservoir.
- **Gwinnett County**'s Water On Wheels initiative is an in-classroom program that travels to Gwinnett County schools. Students participate in engaging hands-on lessons that teach the importance of water conservation and foster attitudes that inspire life-long water efficient behaviors.

Steps Metro Atlanta Residents Can Take to Conserve Water

It's important to note that dry periods are part of the normal weather cycle. We don't know how long this drought may last, so we all need to do our part to conserve.

As a reminder, here are some ways metro Atlanta residents can save water:

- Using a rain gauge to determine how much it has rained over the week before watering outdoor plants. Most outdoor plants need an inch of water per week.
- Water in several short sessions instead of one long session. This reduces runoff and allows water to infiltrate into soil and plant roots.
- Only water lawns when needed. If the blades of grass don't bounce back after walking across the lawn, it is time to water. Water lawns and plants in the early morning and late evening.
- Check and repair leaks inside and outside the home.
- Shorten showers and turn off water when shaving or brushing teeth.
- Fill dishwashers and washing machines. Make sure there is a full load every time.

Find more conservation tips at [My Drop Counts](#).

**Effective September 9, 2016,
Drought Response Level 1**
is in effect in 53 Georgia counties*

Drought Response Level 1

requires that water utilities provide a public information campaign to help citizens better understand drought, its impact on water supplies and the need for water conservation.

These outdoor water uses are allowed during Drought Response Level 1:

Daily watering is allowed between 4 pm and 10 am to plant, grow, manage and maintain lawns and turf, ground cover, flowers, shrubs, trees and other plants, using these methods of application:

- Automated irrigation systems
- Hand watering (without a shut-off nozzle)
- Lawn sprinklers

During installation and for the first 30 days after installation, newly planted/installed lawns and turf, ground cover, flowers, shrubs, trees and other plants can be watered **any day, at any time** without restriction.

Daily water use is allowed **any day, at any time**, for these applications, without restriction:

- Commercial pressure washing
- Drip irrigation or soaker hose
- Food gardens
- Hand watering (with a shut-off nozzle)
- Hydroseeding
- Installation and maintenance of an irrigation system
- Irrigation of public recreational turf areas
- Irrigation of plants for sale
- Irrigation of sports fields
- Water from private wells and bodies of water on property
- Water from an alternate source (grey water, rain water, air-conditioner condensate)

***Drought Response Level 1**
is in effect in these Georgia 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.
