

## **Pennsylvania is under a drought watch.**

Though much-needed rain has fallen in recent days, Pennsylvania officials have placed the entire commonwealth under a drought watch as patterns of below-average precipitation continue through late-June.

- The Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection issued the watch after hearing recommendations from the Commonwealth Drought Task Force.
- Under this watch, residents and businesses are encouraged (*but not required*) to conserve water by cutting down on nonessential use. While a drought watch persists across the entire commonwealth, no Pennsylvania counties have experienced a drought warning or drought emergency to date.
- Drought-like conditions across Pennsylvania heighten risks for wildfires, the Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources warned in a statement.

Pennsylvania has reported at least 1,400 wildfires so far in 2023, easily exceeding 2022's 1,036 reported fires. This year's blazes have burned at least 8,500 acres, again outpacing 2022's 2,700 burned acres.

### **What is a drought watch?**

Droughts are typically measured through the Palmer index, which analyzes soil moisture, temperature, and precipitation to determine drought severity, the U.S. Geological Survey reports. Pennsylvania issues a drought watch when a county's Palmer index falls between -2 and -2.99, upgrading to a drought emergency as levels reach between -3 and -3.99.

While drought watches are not irreversible or overly concerning, they can cause damage to some crops, prompt water shortages and lower levels for wells and streams, the U.S.

Drought Monitor says. Warnings prompt mandatory water restrictions and shortages.

You can view the U.S. Drought Monitor map, updated weekly, online at [drought.gov/data-maps-tools/us-drought-monitor](https://drought.gov/data-maps-tools/us-drought-monitor).

## **Tips for conserving water**

According to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, the average American family uses around three hundred (300) gallons of water per day. Approximately 70% of that comes from indoor sources, including showers, sink faucets and toilets.

Cutting out water use entirely is not necessary or even feasible, but there are several steps you can take to limit your consumption, according to the DEP:

- Turn off your faucets while washing your dishes, brushing your teeth, or shaving.
- When necessary, water plants in the mornings or evenings. Focus on new plants that have shallower root systems.
- Run dishwashers and washing machines less often, using low-water cycles.
- Prioritize full loads.
- Water lawns only when necessary.
- Check for leaks in your toilets, faucets, and pipes.
- When mowing your lawn, set the blades 2 or 3 inches high. Taller grass can shade soil and improve moisture retention.
- Sweep your decks, sidewalks, and driveways instead of using a hose.
- Set up a rain barrel to repurpose rain when it falls.

### **Summary**

Pennsylvania has observed less precipitation this year, well short of the average, of the amount that the state typically sees in a "normal" season, through mid-June. The last few days of rain and predicted rainfall should help alleviate the current conditions.

**\*End Notice\***