



WATER USAGE

In the summer and fall of 2016, Massachusetts experienced the most severe drought conditions it had seen since 1985. The impacts of this drought were compounded by the effects of local water withdrawals from aquifers and reservoirs. Especially during drought years, these withdrawals reduce the amount of water available for streamflow, wildlife, and recreational uses. Water conservation can reduce these negative impacts.

The Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) guideline for residential water use is 65 gallons per person per day. Yet, in 2015 (before the drought) almost a third of MAPC municipalities exceeded that standard, according to DEP reports. Six water suppliers saw residential demand exceeding 80 gallons per person per day:

Dover, Duxbury, Lexington, Nahant, Weston, and Woburn. Fortunately, residents in 66 cities and towns used less than the standard. (Five towns in the region rely solely on private wells.)

In response to the drought, 58 MAPC municipalities implemented water use restrictions in 2016. It remains to be seen whether these were effective in reducing water use to below the state's guidelines. However, as the region continues to experience the effects of changing climate, conserving water every year becomes more and more important. We can never be sure what the next summer will bring.