



A News Release from the Cataraqui Region Conservation Authority

August 10, 2016

CRCA Water Response Team Declares Severe Drought Conditions in Cataraqui Region

Kingston – The Cataraqui Region Water Response Team met yesterday afternoon, and agreed to move from a Moderate to a Severe drought condition declaration across the Cataraqui Region Conservation Authority (CRCA) watershed.

The last four months (April through July) were some of the driest ever recorded in the Kingston area. Only 10 mm of rain fell, on average, across the CRCA in the last 30 days (average is ~70 mm) and there has been essentially no rain yet in August, 1/3 of the way through the month. Stream flows are now exceptionally low, close to the lowest ever recorded, with some streams having dried up entirely.

Lake levels across the CRCA, and eastern Ontario, have been falling due to evaporation (as much as 2.5 cm each day), and are as much as 20 cm below normal for this time of year. These low levels will be potentially exposing hazards that are normally irrelevant. Recreational users (swimmers, boaters, etc.) should exercise caution. These low levels are expected to persist into winter conditions.

The long term forecast appears to predict a continuation of hot and dry conditions through the fall, meaning current conditions may continue for a number of months. Steady, sustained, significant rainfall for a number of days is needed to bring conditions back towards normal. Across the CRCA, watersheds are in a deficit of 110 mm or more over the last 3 months.

With the continued dry conditions, residents using shore wells, or private ground water wells, should be practicing water conservation, as they are likely the most vulnerable users across the jurisdiction, and there is already anecdotal evidence of wells going dry across the region.

The CRCA recommends water conservation for all residents, across the CRCA region and eastern Ontario as good practice, even in normal conditions. Typical residential indoor water use breakdown across the US and Canada is:

Toilet	24%	Leaks	12%
Shower	20%	Other	4%
Faucet	19%	Bath	3%
Clothes Washer	17%	Dishwasher	1%

* Source: Water Research Foundation, <http://www.waterrf.org/PublicReportLibrary/4309A.pdf>

This certainly leaves room for conservation, with wise water use in the home.

The dry conditions also mean high susceptibility for fire, and each of the municipalities of the CRCA has a fire ban in place. Extreme caution should be exercised with any open flames across the region, including cigarettes.

Low water conditions are determined by the Cataraqui Region Water Response Team (WRT) convened by the CRCA. Membership includes water managers, major water users, public health, agriculture, school boards, marina operators, golf courses, government agencies, dam operators and others



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The Water Response Team recommends water conservation across the jurisdiction, for all water users, residential and commercial, especially those areas that are supplied by a ground water well or shore well. The team is asking residents and businesses of the region to be wary of water usage, and try to conserve water anywhere they can; this includes the outside watering of plants and lawns, and washing driveways, sidewalks, cars, etc. Permit To Take Water holders are also encouraged to reduce water takings during this exceptionally dry time. Those residents relying on wells and shore wells should be concerned that, as the drought continues, their water supply may run dry, and should plan for what to do when their primary source of water runs dry.

Lawns that have turned brown from the drought are not “dead”, the grass has just gone dormant from lack of water. When rainfall returns, the grass will come out of dormancy and perk back up. In addition, it should be noted that lawns only require about 25 mm of water per week, any more than that can weaken the root system, making grass more susceptible to adverse conditions. Similarly, trees need 4 to 5 gallons of water once a week, even in drought conditions.

It should be noted that taking water from streams in barrels or containers for watering gardens can impact other users, and the ecological function of streams. Caution should be exercised with any withdrawals from surface water. It is not recommended to fill dry wells with surface water, or treated water, better to fill cisterns or other storage units, where all the water can be used. Many of our area municipalities offer bulk water purchases from their water treatment plants.

Municipalities may invoke water use bylaws and residents should find out what bylaws are in effect in their municipalities regarding water use.

The CRCA WRT declared a Minor drought condition on May 26th, and upgraded that condition to Moderate on July 5th.

The CRCA has numerous water conservation web links on their website at <http://crca.ca/education/publications-resources/resources-for-wise-water-use/>.

The Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs has a helpful list of web links on their web site: <http://www.omafra.gov.on.ca/english/crops/weather/adverseweather.html#dry>

As does the Saskatchewan Watershed Authority: http://www.battleford.ca/mri_files/water_use_in_your_home.pdf

A “Minor” drought condition is the first of three levels and reflects concern. “Moderate” suggests a potentially serious problem. “Severe” indicates a failure of the water supply to meet demand.

The declaration of “Severe” conditions is not a declaration of an emergency, but an indicator of the severe dry conditions, and impacts being felt across the CRCA as a result. Any declarations of emergency are a municipal decision.

The CRCA will continue to monitor conditions, and will provide updates as conditions change.

In order that we can track impacts of the drought conditions in the watershed, we request that any individuals or businesses in the Cataraqui Region who may be experiencing difficulties with their wells (groundwater and shore), or are seeing other signs of watershed stress due to the dry conditions, please contact the Conservation Authority by calling 613-546-4228 or (in 613 area code), 1-877-956-CRCA(2722), ext. 241, or fill in the survey on our website www.crc.ca/drought