

Sept.9, 2016

Georgia EPD Declares Level 1 Drought Response, Encourages Water Conservation

Persistent dry conditions have prompted the Georgia Environmental Protection Division (EPD) to declare a Level 1 Drought Response in 53 counties. A Level 1 Drought Response declaration means local water utilities in the affected counties will be required to begin a public information campaign to help citizens better understand drought, its impact on water supplies and the need for water conservation.

“A Level 1 Drought Response is a good opportunity to partner with our public water utilities to promote good stewardship and to remind Georgians of the importance of using water wisely,” said EPD Director Richard Dunn.

According to the federal government's U.S. Drought Monitor <http://droughtmonitor.unl.edu/Home/StateDroughtMonitor.aspx?GA>, varying degrees of drought impact about two-thirds of the state. Nearly all of the counties affected by the Level 1 Drought Response declaration are experiencing severe and extreme drought conditions.

“Water utilities have already taken action to insure that water supplies are generally good and practicing effective water conservation will help provide sufficient supplies through the coming months if dry conditions persist,” said EPD Director Dunn.

The public information campaign under a Level 1 Drought Response requires both groundwater and surface water utilities to circulate drought and water conservation information in one or more of the following: newspaper advertisements, water bill inserts, website homepages, social media and notices posted in public libraries.

The public information campaign will be required in the following 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. (See attached map.)

In addition, the outdoor water use schedule required under the Water Stewardship Act of 2010 remains in place statewide. This schedule allows outdoor water use year-round between 4 p.m. and 10 a.m. There are several exceptions, such as new plantings, listed at <http://epd.georgia.gov/water-conservation>.

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“North Georgia has had a hot, dry summer and the fall season is historically a dry time of the year,” said State Climatologist Bill Murphey. “Current drought conditions are likely to continue through the fall season, although tropical activity and rain-producing systems can provide beneficial rainfall.”

Public water systems may not impose restrictions on outdoor watering that are different from the state requirements unless they obtain a variance from the EPD. Public water systems needing to impose outdoor water use restrictions more or less stringent than the state requirements may apply for a variance from the state’s current drought response and EPD is required to act upon that request within 5 business days. If conditions warrant in the future, EPD can declare additional drought responses to further manage water use.

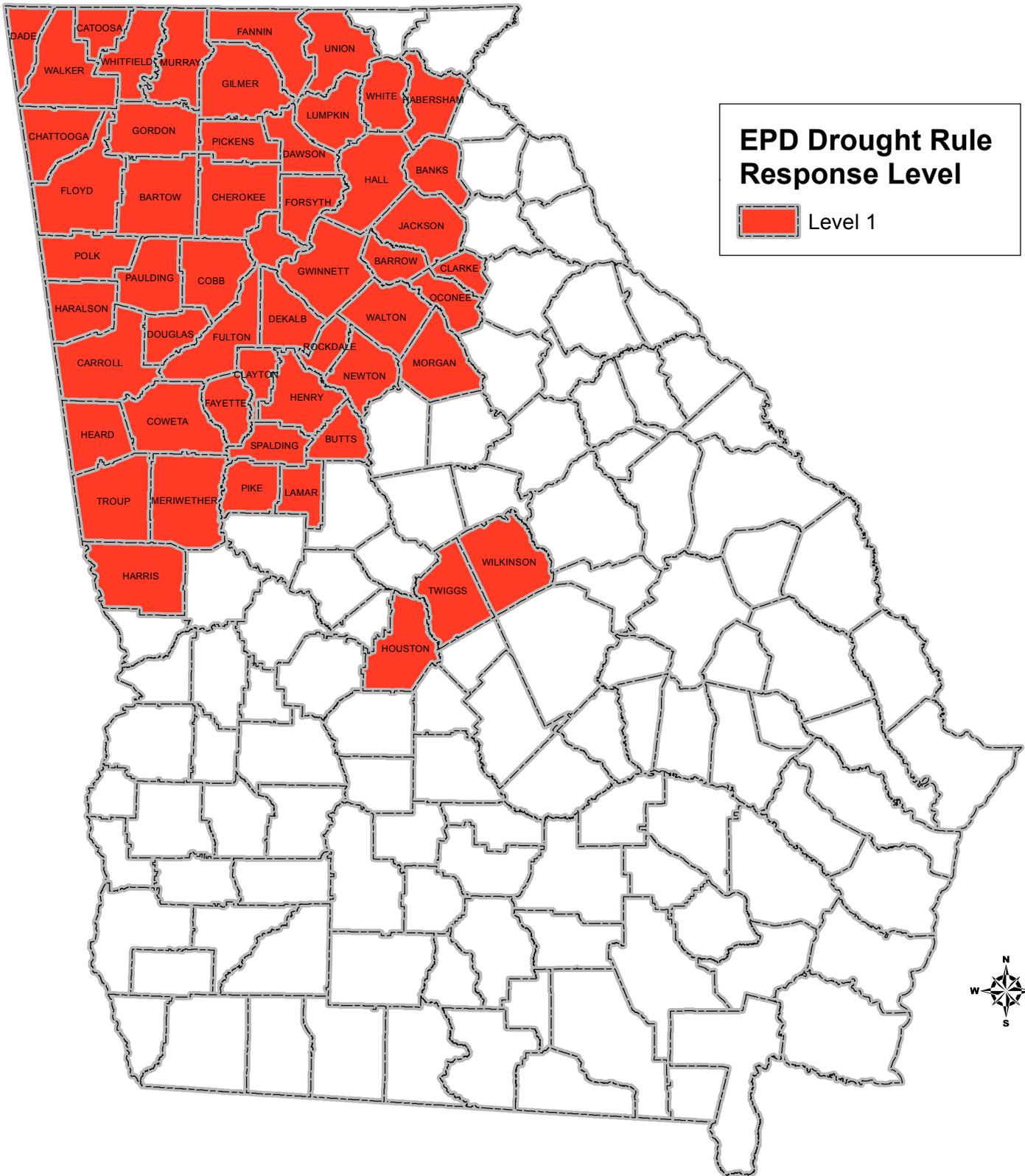
The state’s rules for drought management and outdoor water use have changed since the last major drought. More information, including tips for water conservation, is available at <http://epd.georgia.gov/water-conservation>.

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Georgia Drought Response Declaration September 9, 2016



Fulton County Outdoor Water Use

On June 24, 2015, the Georgia Department of Natural Resources Board adopted Drought Management rules that replaced former rule provisions relating to outdoor water use as well as the 2003 Drought Management Plan. The Drought Management rules require specific drought response strategies during specified levels of declared drought that may limit or restrict some of the outdoor water uses discussed below.

Watering Schedule

The Georgia Water Stewardship Act of 2010 allows landscape and lawn irrigation **any day of the week between the hours of 4:00pm and 10:00am.**

The following outdoor water uses also are allowed daily at any time of the day by anyone:

- Commercial agricultural operations as defined in Code Section 1-3-3;
- Capture and reuse of cooling system condensate or storm water in compliance with applicable local ordinances and state guidelines;
- Reuse of gray water in compliance with Code Section 31-3-5.2 and applicable local board of health regulations adopted pursuant thereto;
- Use of reclaimed waste water by a designated user from a system permitted by the Environmental Protection Division of the department to provide reclaimed waste water;
- Irrigation of personal food gardens;
- Irrigation of new and replanted plant, seed, or turf in landscapes, golf courses, or sports turf fields during installation and for a period of 30 days immediately following the date of installation;
- Drip irrigation or irrigation using soaker hoses;
- Hand watering with a hose with automatic cutoff or handheld container;
- Use of water withdrawn from private water wells or surface water by an owner or operator of property if such well or surface water is on said property;
- Irrigation of horticultural crops held for sale, resale, or installation;
- Irrigation of athletic fields, golf courses, or public turf grass recreational areas;
- Installation, maintenance, or calibration of irrigation systems; or
- Hydro seeding.

Please note that the list is not all inclusive. A complete copy of the exemptions is located at The Drought Management rules are available at <http://rules.sos.ga.gov/gac/391-3-30>

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