

Michael F. Easley  
Governor



State of North Carolina  
Office of the Governor

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For Release: **IMMEDIATE**  
Date: July 31, 2008

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**GOV. EASLEY SIGNS HOUSE BILL 2499, DROUGHT MANAGEMENT ACT, INTO LAW**  
*Legislation Will Strengthen Governor's Ability To Assist Communities Facing Droughts*

**RALEIGH** – Gov. Mike Easley today signed House Bill 2499, “An act to improve drought preparedness and response in North Carolina, as recommended by the Environmental Review Commission.” The new law expands the ability of the governor and local communities to respond when drought conditions worsen and encourages greater planning, conservation and cooperation.

“If North Carolina is to continue making economic progress, all our communities must effectively manage their water supplies,” Easley said. “This legislation makes sure that in the future, we have the authority to direct a community suffering in a severe, extreme or exceptional drought, to take the important steps to prevent harm to public health, safety and the environment.”

The new law gives the governor and the Department of Environment and Natural Resources the ability to hasten the process for declaring a drought emergency. The governor will have the authority to declare a local water emergency based on the recommendation of the secretary of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources. Under the old law, the governor could only declare an emergency if there was an immediate threat to a community’s health or safety.

Under the new law, the Department of Environment and Natural Resources will have the authority to require local governments to adopt and enforce water conservation measures. Every five years, water systems must submit a water supply plan to the department for approval. The plan must include a water conservation strategy, including levels of mandatory conservation measures and triggers for moving from one level to the next. In situations of “extreme” or “exceptional” drought, the department can require a local water system to implement more stringent water conservation measures if the Department finds that the actions already taken by the water system are not reducing water use sufficiently.

Also, the legislation gives the state more and better information about water use. Any person that uses more than 10,000 gallons of water per day for agricultural purposes will be required to report their withdrawals to the Department of Agriculture & Consumer Services. During times of “extreme” or “exceptional” drought conditions, the Department of Environment and Natural Resources may require public water systems to report water usage weekly.

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The bill passed the Senate 36-9 and the House of Representatives 68-36. Primary House sponsors were: Lucy Allen (D-Franklin), Pryor Gibson (D-Anson) and Russell Tucker (D-Duplin). In the Senate, the primary sponsor was Sen. Daniel Clodfelter (D-Mecklenburg). Portions of the new law go into effect Oct. 1, 2008, while other portions go into effect on Dec. 1, 2008 and July 1, 2009.

More information on North Carolina's water conservation efforts can be found online at:  
[www.savewaternc.org](http://www.savewaternc.org)

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