

Michael F. Easley
Governor



State of North Carolina
Office of the Governor

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GOV. EASLEY SAYS N.C. DROUGHT STATUS WORSE NOW THAN A YEAR AGO
Announces \$10 Million Funding For Drought-Related Interconnection Projects

RALEIGH – Gov. Mike Easley today warned that current drought conditions in North Carolina are worse now than this same time a year ago. Unless there is significant rainfall the state could face a more serious situation than in 2007. The federal drought map released today shows 14 western counties in exceptional drought, twice the number from last week. Ninety-seven of the state’s 100 counties are in some level of drought.

“It is good that we started conserving a year and a half ago,” Easley said. “The drought conditions are worse now than they were last year at this same time.”

The latest federal drought map indicates there are 56 counties in the western half of the state either at exceptional, extreme or severe drought levels. During the same week in 2007, there were 21 counties in extreme or severe drought and none in exceptional, the worst category. This week’s drought map and the map for the same week last year are included in this release.

Rainfall in late May and through this month has been below normal which means streams and groundwater conditions are not at the rates to keep reservoirs full. In its May North Carolina Weather Review, the National Weather Service warned that the drop in rainfall is a “red flag” for the summer season. According to the report: “If there are long periods without significant rainfall over the interior sections of the state, specifically the major metropolitan areas of Charlotte, Winston-Salem, Greensboro, High Point and Raleigh-Durham, the stream flow will quickly tail off. This would greatly limit the recharge into the reservoirs. The cities and towns that loosened very strict water restrictions during the spring 2008 may have to think about tightening the restrictions again before July and August.” The report is available online at: www.erh.noaa.gov/rah/ncsummaries.

The governor also announced the awarding of \$10 million to three public water system projects to help them prepare for drought-related emergencies. Funding for these projects through the Drinking Water Emergency Loan Program supports Easley’s earlier admonitions to local water systems that those among the hardest hit work to identify ways to ensure adequate water supplies for citizens during this and future droughts. The loan program is administered by the Division of Environmental Health’s Public Water Supply Section.

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The three projects and amounts awarded are:

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- \$1.4 million for the town of Tryon to stabilize and enhance its water system by building an interconnection with Saluda. In addition, a new booster pump station will be built and improvements will be made to the Mountain Lake water source.
- \$2.2 million for the town of Blowing Rock to connect with Boone's water system to supplement Blowing Rock's limited supply.
- \$5.8 million for the city of Lenoir to help pay for a new water intake and pump station to provide access to a deeper location in its source of drinking water for city residents and regional water customers.

These three projects were eligible for state emergency loan funds because they address a potential drought emergency in a water system identified as a "Tier 1" system. Those systems are considered to be the most vulnerable to drought either because they lack adequate access to either potable water or water for treatment and are at risk of a water supply crisis if conditions persist, or because they have less than 100 days of water supply remaining.

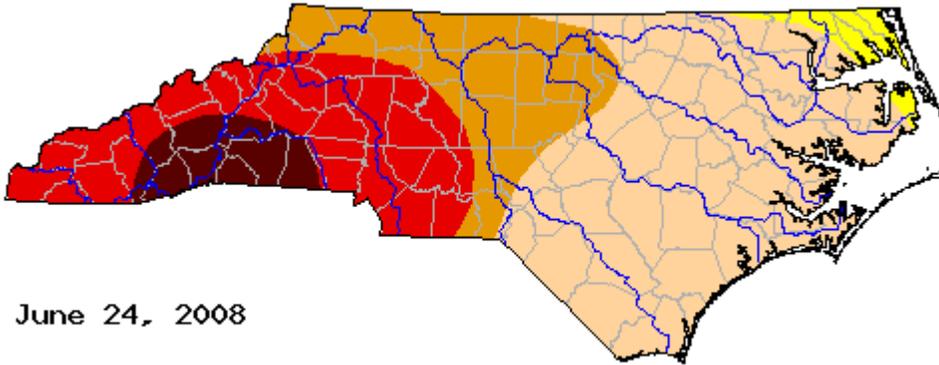
"These systems are facing the most severe water shortages resulting from the recent drought," said Easley. "The drought is persisting, and these systems have worked with state officials to identify new water sources. This money will enable these communities to connect to new sources to help avoid the dire circumstances they faced last year."

Each project must adhere to four requirements to receive the allotted funds:

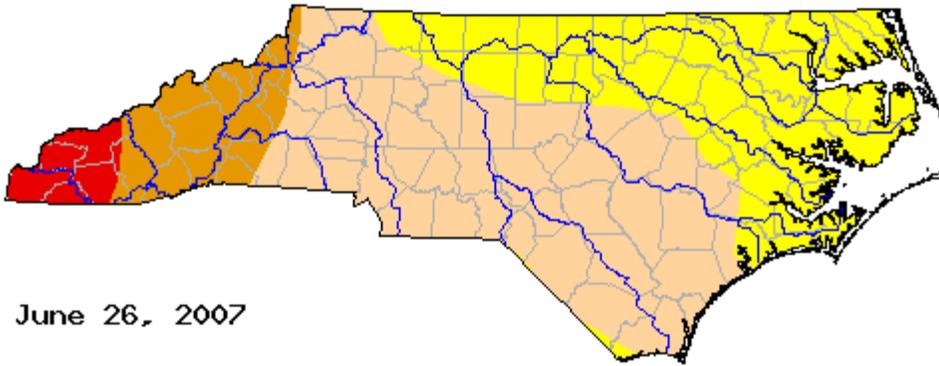
1. The system's management must obtain plans and specifications approval from the Public Water Supply Section.
2. Any environmental review or permitting processes must be completed, unless an exemption can be demonstrated.
3. If applicable, documentation must be provided of any supplemental project funding.
4. An authorization to construct must be obtained prior to beginning construction on the applicable project.

For more information on the drought and saving water, go to www.SaveWaterNC.org and for more on the Emergency Loan Program, go to http://www.deh.enr.state.nc.us/pws/srf/Pages/el_program.htm.

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June 24, 2008



June 26, 2007

- Drought Classifications**
- D0 - Abnormally Dry
 - D1 - Moderate Drought
 - D2 - Severe Drought
 - D3 - Extreme Drought
 - D4 - Exceptional Drought

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