

Michael F. Easley
Governor



State of North Carolina
Office of the Governor

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GOV. EASLEY URGES GENERAL ASSEMBLY TO APPROVE DROUGHT LEGISLATION
Drought Spreads Across State Due to Recent Hot, Dry Weather

RALEIGH – Gov. Mike Easley today reminded citizens across the state to continue using water wisely as drought conditions in North Carolina worsened this week. He called on the General Assembly to approve his proposed drought legislation to modernize North Carolina’s public water systems, mandate water conservation and efficiency, and upgrade the response to water emergencies.

“The legislature has been in town five weeks and still has not taken up our request on authorization to deal with this drought,” said Easley. “We have a drought this year and the legislature needs to act this year.”

The deteriorating conditions mean that streams are much drier than a year ago, when the state’s worst drought in history was starting to creep eastward through North Carolina. Groundwater levels are also declining in parts of North Carolina and the lack of recent rainfall means that the amount of water entering streams and reservoirs is declining. In addition, conditions could continue to degrade since large portions of eastern North Carolina are not forecast to receive significant rainfall anytime soon.

Thursday’s release of the federal drought map shows the drought worsening in parts of the mountains and eastern North Carolina. As of Thursday, more than two-thirds of the state’s 100 counties are in some level of drought. Thirty-two counties were in extreme drought, 15 in severe drought, 24 in moderate drought, 26 were abnormally dry and three were not considered to be in a drought category. Local public waters systems are still requiring water conservation as 4.95 million people, or about 73 percent of those who receive water from systems the state tracks, are subject to voluntary or mandatory water use restrictions.

The dry conditions and scorching heat last week led the N.C. Division of Forest Resources to ban open burning in Hyde, Tyrrell, Washington and Beaufort counties – the site of the Evans Road Fire, the nation’s largest active wildfire. The Evans Road Fire has grown to nearly 40,000 acres since it started due to lightning June 1. The ban on open burning will be expanded tomorrow to include Bladen, Brunswick, Columbus, Duplin, New Hanover and Pender counties, due to the worsening drought and wildfire conditions.

For more information on water conservation and the drought, go to www.SaveWaterNC.org.

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