**Washington County**

**Water Shortage Response Plan Ordinance**

10/26/2023

# Section 1. Authority to Implement

When conditions dictate, the Washington County Utilities Director and ORC, under direction of the County Manager shall implement a Water Shortage Response Plan. Conditions, which may require the Plan to be enacted, are outlined in Section 2.

County Manager Washington County Utilities Director

Washington County Manager ORC of Water Department

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| **Stage** | **Response** | **Description** |
| 1 | Voluntary Reductions | Water users are encouraged to reduce their water use and improve water use efficiency; however, no penalties apply for noncompliance. Water supply conditions indicate a potential for shortage. |
| 2 | Mandatory Reductions I | Water users must abide required water use reduction and efficiency measures; penalties apply for noncompliance. Water supply conditions are significantly lower than the seasonal norm and water shortage conditions are expected to persist. |
| 3 | Mandatory Reductions II | Same as in Stage 2 |
| 4 | Emergency Reductions | Water supply conditions are substantially diminished and pose an imminent threat to human health or environmental integrity. |
| 5 | Water Rationing | Water supply conditions are substantially diminished and remaining supplies must be allocated to preserve human health and environmental integrity. |

# Section 2. Factors Leading to the Implementation of the Water Shortage Response Plan

Several parameters will require the County to begin the Response Plan. Also including but may not be limited by a significant reduction in well water levels, a significant increase in the average pump run times for predetermined total flows at the wells, contaminants in the water system and/or water main breaks.

If the determining factors are related to well water levels or pump run times the phases will be enacted as specified in Section IV.

# Section 3. Water Use Classifications

In order to facilitate a fair and equitable Response Plan, every water use will be grouped into one of three classifications:

Class I – Essential Water Uses

These uses include but may not be limited to water use required to/for:

Sustain human life and the lives of domestic pets

Maintain minimum standards of hygiene and sanitation

Health care uses necessary for patient care and rehabilitation

Firefighting, including training and drills as approved by the County of Washington Manager

Class II- Socially or Economically Important Water Uses

These uses include but may not be limited to water use required to/for: Preserve commercial vegetable gardens, fruit orchards, nursery stock and livestock maintenance Outdoor commercial watering, public or private, using conservation measures.

Establish vegetation, using minimal amounts, after construction/earth moving activities (only allowed in areas required by law or regulation) Filling and operation of municipal swimming pools and private pools that serve 25 or more residences

Operate commercial car washes, restaurants, laundromats, clubs, schools, churches, and similar commercial establishments

Class III – Non-Essential Water Uses

These uses include but may not be limited to water use required to: Operate fountains, ornamental pools and recreational swimming pools that serve fewer than 25 residences

Non-commercially wash motor vehicles, sidewalks, etc.

Non-commercially water gardens, lawns, parks, playing fields and recreational areas

# Section 4. Phased Response\Reduction Goals

When the Water Shortage Response Plan is implemented, it may be in a phased process as outlined below:

Stage 1 – Voluntary Conservation

This phase will be enacted when it is determined that one or more of the parameters outlined in Section 2 is met. If this occurs, the consumers will be notified promptly by any or all of the following; mailers, door hangers, postings on the County of Washington’s internet site (www.washconc.org), local news media, public postings at the County Office, Post Office, reverse 911. The public will be asked to begin voluntary conservation measures. Specific conservation methods will be made available to the public by the above listed notification avenues.

If the determining parameter(s) return to seasonal norms, the measures will be lifted. However, failure of the determining parameter(s) to return to a state of seasonal normalcy may require the initiation of Phase II.

During Phase I, industrial facilities will be required to submit to the Washington County Manager and Utilities Director a water shortage response program. This program should include methods that will allow the facilities to reduce their water usage by 25%.

Stage 2 – Mandatory

This phase will begin when the County Manager and Utilities Director issues a water shortage advisory. The consumers will be notified by one or all of the methods noted in Phase I. All users will be required to adhere to the voluntary conservation measures as noted in Phase 1. Class III uses will be banned.

Class II uses will be allowed although outdoor vegetative watering will be limited according to the resident's street address. Even numbered addresses will be allowed to water on even days of the month. Odd numbered addresses will be allowed to water on odd days of the month. Allowable times for watering will be limited to the hours between 7:00 p.m. and 8:00 a.m...

Failure to adhere to required conditions will result in a written notice of violation for the first offense and/or a $50 fine. Thereafter, the County may impose a fine of $50 per violation for the second and third offense. A fourth offense will result in a $250 fine. Further offenses may require the offending party to have his/her water service disrupted.

During Phase II industrial users will be required to evaluate their Water Shortage Response Plan with the County’s Utilities and Utilities Director as it relates to their 25% water reduction goal.

If Phase II action fails to alleviate the water shortage, the County will enter into the third and final phase.

Stage 3 – Emergency

This phase will commence with the issuance of a water shortage emergency declaration from the County Manager. Users will be notified by any or all of the methods noted in Phase I. All users will be required to use voluntary conservation measures outlined in Phase 1. Class III uses will be banned and Class II uses will be allowed although commercial vegetative watering (i.e., nurseries, livestock, etc.) may be further reduced.

Industrial users will be required to implement their water reduction program immediately.

Failure to comply with mandates during Phase III will require the offending party to pay a $100 fine for the first offense, a $350 fine for the second offense and the disruption of water service for the third offense.

In addition, residential users will be allotted 1000 gallons per month per bedroom per structure. If the user uses 1001-1250 gallons per month per bedroom a surcharge of 25% will be added to the monthly water bill. If the user consumes 1251-1500 gallons per month per bedroom a surcharge of 75% will be added to the monthly water bill. If the user consumes any amount in excess of 1501 gallons per month per bedroom a surcharge of 150% will be added to the monthly water bill.

Commercial, industrial and institutional facilities will be required to reduce their monthly water consumption by 25% of the previous 12-month water consumption average to maintain the current water rate for that month. The average water use can be evaluated on an individual basis for facilities with seasonal water demand fluctuations. A 10-24% water use reduction from the previous 12-month water use average will require the County to impose a 25% surcharge on the monthly water bill. A 0-9% water use reduction from the previous 12-month water use average will require the County to impose a 50% surcharge on the monthly water bill. An increase of 1-25% above the previous 12-month water use average will result in a surcharge of 100% on the monthly water bill. Any amount used above 25% of the previous 12-month average water use will require a monthly water bill surcharge of 150%.

In Stage 4, Emergency Reductions, customers must continue all actions from previous stages and further reduce their water use by 25% compared to their previous month’s water bill. A ban on all use of drinking water except to protect public health and safety is implemented and drought surcharges increase to 2 times the normal water rate.

The goal of Stage 5, Water Rationing, is to provide drinking water to protect public health (e.g. residences, residential health care facilities and correctional facilities). In Stage 5, all customers are only permitted to use water at the minimum required for public health protection. Firefighting is the only allowable outdoor water use and pickup locations for distributing potable water will be announced according to Washington County Emergency Response Plan. Drought surcharges increase to 5 times the normal water rate.

Triggers

Washington County water source is groundwater. The following measurements of well pumping times and well levels in relationship to pump intake levels trigger entry into corresponding water restriction stages.

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| **Stage** | **Well Operating Conditions** |
| 1 | Pumping Time >10 hrs.  20% reduction in seasonal normal distance from static water level and pump intake  20% increase pumping time for same output |
| 2 | Pumping Time >12 hrs.  40% reduction in distance from static water level and pump intake  40% increase pumping time for same output |
| 3 | Pumping Time >14 hrs.  60% reduction in distance from static water level and pump intake  60% increase pumping time for same output |
| 4 | Pumping Time >20 hrs.  80% reduction in distance from static water level and pump intake |
| 5 | Water level at pump intake elevation |

# Section 5. Enforcement

Enforcement of mandatory conservation and associated fines will be the responsibility of the Utilities Director under direction of the County Manager.

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| **Water Shortage Level** | **First Violation** | **Second Violation** | **Third Violation** |
| Voluntary Reductions | Notice of Violation  (NOV) | NOV and $50 Fine | $100 Fine |
| Mandatory Reductions (Stages 2 and 3) | Notice of Violation | $250 | Discontinuation of Service |
| Emergency Reductions | $350 | Discontinuation of Service | Discontinuation of Service |
| Water Rationing | $500 | Discontinuation of Service | Discontinuation of Service |

# Section 6. Variances

Applications for water use variance requests are available from the County

Utilities Office. All applications must be submitted to the Utilities Office for review by the Utilities Director or his or her designee. A decision to approve or deny individual variance requests will be determined within two weeks of submittal after careful consideration of the following criteria: impact on water demand, expected duration, alternative source options, social and economic importance, purpose (i.e. necessary use of drinking water) and the prevention of structural damage.

# Section 7. Public Comment

Customers will have multiple opportunities to comment on the provisions of the water shortage response plan. First, a draft plan will be published in *The Roanoke Beacon* and on the County of Washington website. A public hearing will be scheduled with notice printed in all customer water bills to collect comments on the draft. All subsequent revisions to the draft plan will be published at least 30 days prior to an adoption vote by Washington’s County Board.

# Section 8. Effectiveness

The effectiveness of the Washington water shortage response plan will be determined by comparing the stated water conservation goals with observed water use reduction data. Other factors to be considered include frequency of plan activation, any problem periods without activation, total number of violation citations, desired reductions attained and evaluation of demand reductions compared to the previous year’s seasonal data.

As the determining parameter(s) decrease in severity and return to acceptable levels (seasonal norms), the County Manager will lift the Water Shortage Response Plan.

Return to Normal

When water shortage conditions have abated and the situation is returning to normal, water conservation measures employed during each phase should be decreased in reverse order of implementation. Permanent measures directed toward long-term monitoring and conservation should be implemented or continued so that the community will be in a better position to prevent shortages and respond to recurring water shortage conditions.

# Section 9. Revision

The water shortage response plan will be reviewed and revised as needed to adapt to new circumstances affecting water supply and demand, following implementation of emergency restrictions, and at a minimum of every five years in conjunction with the updating of our Local Water Supply Plan. Further, a water shortage response planning work group will review procedures following each emergency or rationing stage to recommend any necessary improvements to the plan to Washington’s County Board. Washington County Manager and Washington Utility Director is responsible for initiating all subsequent revisions.