



OFFICE OF THE COMMISSIONERS AND MANAGER

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News Release

Drought Management Advisory Group Concerned about Worsening Drought Conditions

UCPW Urges Customers to Conserve Water

June 27, 2008, Monroe, NC – Union County Public Works urges its customers to continue their conservation efforts by only watering their lawns and washing vehicles one day each week.

Union County is currently under Stage 3 water restrictions which allow customers living at odd numbered addresses to wash vehicles and water lawns only on Saturday and customers residing at even numbered and unnumbered addresses to wash vehicles and water lawns only on Sunday. Residential pressure washing is allowed and drip irrigation and hand-held use of watering containers and hoses is permitted to maintain flowers, shrubs, trees and vegetable gardens.

Public Works appeal for continued water conservation is in response to this week's announcement from the Catawba-Wateree Drought Management Advisory Group (CW-DMAG) that it is concerned about the area's worsening drought conditions.

The CW-DMAG includes nearly two dozen community water systems, including Union County Public Works, and other significant water users between Lenoir, N.C. and Camden, S.C. that withdraw water from the Catawba-Wateree Basin.

Although it recommended its members continue with the present limits on outdoor water uses to no more than one day per week, CW-DMAG also decided to review the conditions more frequently.

"The hot weather is back, and we continue to receive less than average rainfall," said Ed Bruce, CW-DMAG coordinator. "Reviewing drought conditions more frequently allows for the CW-DMAG to respond to worsening conditions more quickly."

As a member of the CW-DMAG, Union County imposes water restrictions recommended by the group. The county can also make its restrictions more stringent. For instance, Union County permits lawn watering and vehicle washing one day per week under its Stage 3 restrictions, but it also prohibits the following activities that weren't recommended by the CW-DMAG:

- Washing public buildings, sidewalks and streets, except as required for safety and/or to maintain regulatory compliance.
- Using water for dust control during construction.

- Conducting flushing or hydrant testing programs, except to maintain water quality or other special circumstances approved by the director in advance.
- Filling new swimming pools.
- Serving drinking water at restaurants, cafeterias, or other food establishments, except upon request.

"Our customers have been very diligent in conserving water since Union County enacted water restrictions more than one year ago," said County Manager Al Greene. "We need the continued cooperation of our customers during the summer months when rainfall seems to be less frequent.

"If we don't get a significant amount of rainfall soon, all indications point toward a recommendation by the CW-DMAG to eliminate all lawn watering and vehicle washing. This could happen after the group meets again in early July."

The CW-DMAG arrives at its recommendations after reviewing the area's major drought indicators along with the National Weather Service's predictions of six-month weather trends.

The U.S. Drought Monitor map continues to show the area in an "Extreme" drought, just one level better than its worst drought designation, but an area in a neighboring basin now shows "Exceptional" drought, the worst designation.

The long-term trends for groundwater levels have continued to decrease slightly, and levels are still below normal for this time of year. The six-month average of area stream flows has peaked near 46 percent of normal keeping it in Stage 3.

The reservoir storage index has begun to decrease due to the increased summer evaporation and temperatures. To date 2008's rainfall has been about nine inches below normal, and the National Weather Service is predicting lower-than-average rainfall in the next several weeks.

"Water is a precious commodity in Union County," Greene said. "Unfortunately, tighter restrictions may become necessary to ensure our customers have enough water to drink and use inside their homes."

Additional information concerning Union County's Stage 3 water restrictions and conservation tips are available at www.co.union.nc.us.

Customers with questions about the Stage 3 restrictions should call 704-296-4210.

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