

York Water District urges customers to conserve

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YORK, Maine — The York Water District is asking its customers to voluntarily conserve water for non-essential uses, as it continues to implement measures to deal with a drought that has left Chases Pond nearly 2 feet below the average seasonal level.

This measure is taken less than a week after the water district asked the town's fire departments to curtail hydrant use for training, and announced it would begin piping in 500,000 to 1 million gallons a day from the Kennebunk, Kennebunkport and Wells Water District for up to 30 days starting this week.

The YWD actions come as the U.S. Drought Monitor announced that parts of southern York County, including York, have been upgraded from severe to extreme drought conditions.

It also comes just days after the weekend that saw significant rainfall. But Superintendent Don Neumann said that rain brought little relief. It brought Chases Pond up 2.5 inches. Two inches equal 7.5 million gallons, he said. Daily usage following Labor Day is between 1.2 million and 1.5 million gallons.

Neumann said the trustees at their meeting last week determined they would ask for voluntary water conservation, to "be proactive. Things are moving a little fast right now, and we want to make sure we don't miss an opportunity" to conserve the water at Chases Pond.

He said he is asking people to, for instance, curtail their use of lawn irrigation systems or reduce the number of times they wash their cars or take fewer showers every week.

Other measures might include only running a dishwasher when it's full, turning off water while brushing your teeth, taking a shower instead of a bath or running full loads of laundry.

“For the most part,” Neumann said, “York residents have been conservation-minded anyway. But we’re just asking for people to pay more attention to their water use.”

The YWD on Monday began to pump water from the KKWWD, allowed under an emergency interconnection agreement between the two districts following a drought in the early 2000s. Customers won't see any increase in their bills, Neumann said. The cost to the YWD is \$600 per million gallons, “so if we take half a million, it's only going to cost \$300.” He said the cost would be covered through the district's regular operations and maintenance budget, offset by cost savings because fewer chemicals and less power will be needed during this period.

Because it's anticipated most of the water used daily will come from Chases Pond, customers will notice little difference in water quality. KKWWD does put fluoride in its water, but by the time it reaches the York connection, “it should be minimized or depleted,” said Neumann, who added YWD staff would monitor fluoride levels regularly.

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