

Date: February 8, 2021

To: Town Council, Town of Coventry

From: John Elsesser, Town Manager

Subject: Sustainable CT – Drought Communications Plan Review and Adoption

As of January 2021, the Town of Coventry has earned a Silver Certification for Sustainable CT. Sustainable CT is a voluntary certification program that recognizes thriving and resilient Connecticut municipalities. An independently funded, grassroots, municipal effort, Sustainable CT provides a wide-ranging menu of best practices. Municipalities choose Sustainable CT actions, implement them, and earn points toward certification.

As we look toward the next certification cycle, we have developed a Drought Communications Plan (enclosed) to inform residents about voluntary and mandatory drought restriction declared by the local water utility and the governor. Additionally, updated links (enclosed) to information about water conservation, drought information and status will be posted to the town's website and posted on the Town Manager's Facebook page.

CT Water serves as the town's major local water utility. The town is requesting CT Water to assist in a project to develop a better strategy for water conservation. This would assist in reducing the need for an updated sewer treatment system. As household water consumption is limited, less water is discharged into the sewer system.

Please take your time and review the enclosed Drought Communications Plan for adoption.

If you have any questions or concerns regarding this request, please contact my office at jelsesser@coventryct.org or (860) 742-6324.

Thank you,

John Elsesser
Town Manager
Town of Coventry

Town of Coventry Drought Communications Plan 2021

(To be reviewed no less than every 3 years)

The Town of Coventry property owners receive their water through private wells or respective Associations and water provided by the Connecticut Water Company. The Town's communication policy regarding water levels and drought conditions is guided by best practices for private well uses and guidelines provided by CT Water. The Coventry Drought Communications Policy is designed to keep the community apprised of low water levels and drought conditions, and to educate property owners on water conservation best practices.

Definition of Drought

Drought is defined as a period of dryness, especially when prolonged, resulting in a shortage of water and damage to crops. Drought is typically the result of abnormally low rainfall and can prevent the successful growth of vegetation.¹

Plan Objectives

1. Maintain effective and timely communications with the Coventry community as it pertains to water supply and drought conditions, including both voluntary and mandatory restrictions.
2. Ensure local residents and businesses are informed of low water volumes and drought conditions in the local drinking water bodies.
3. Promote and advocate water conservation activities among Coventry property owners.
4. Leverage effective platforms to relay water supply levels, drought conditions, water conservation resources, and Town water conservation efforts to the public.

Audience

The Town of Coventry property owners, including local farmers and businesses. Local interest groups include, but are not limited to the Regional Chamber of Commerce (Tolland County Chamber of Commerce & Windham Region Chamber of Commerce), Coventry Lake Advisory Committee, the Conservation Commission, and the Inland Wetlands Agency.

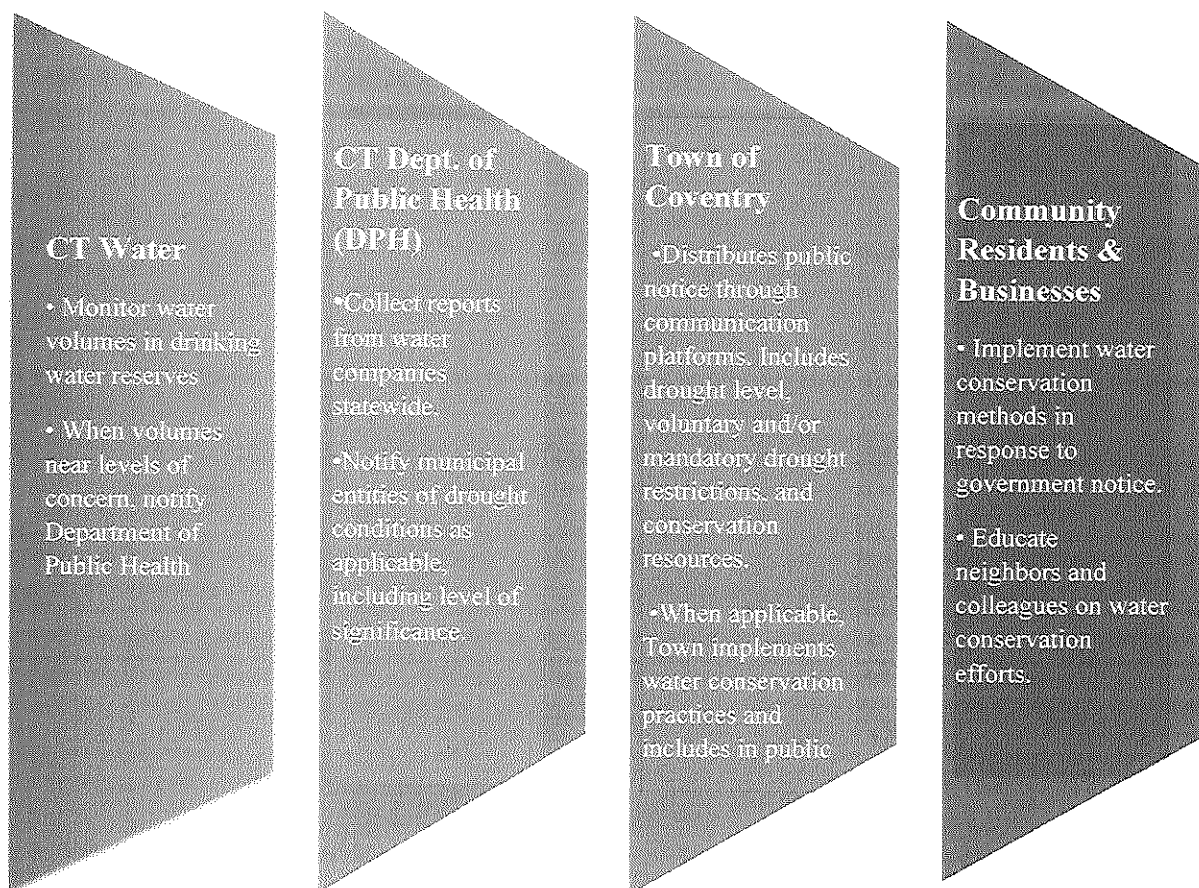
Communication Platforms

- Town website – news section and community spotlight on homepage;
- eNotifications – Web-based subscription email notification system;
- Facebook – Town managed pages and community group pages;
- Local Media Outlets – Willimantic Chronicle, Journal Inquirer and Hartford Courant;
- Mailers and Public Reports (E.g. summer tax bill mailings, annual reports);
- Direct mailers (drought conditions only) – For use in emergency situations only;
- Everbridge – reverse 911 notification system– For use in emergency situations only.

¹ Source: <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/drought>

Action 3.6 Manage for Drought and Municipal Water Use

The Process and Players



Drinking water sources in Tolland County are managed by several companies who evaluate and report on their respective water volume and conditions on an ongoing basis. When water volumes are low, the water companies relay the information to the CT Department of Public Health (DPH), who in turn, communicates water level status to the local governments. The Eastern Highland Health District receives such updates from the CT DPH, and forward to the Town Manager's Office. Upon receipt of such information, the Town Manager's Office disseminates the current water conditions, water conservation resources, and voluntary and/or mandatory drought restrictions through the town website, eNotification system, and Facebook. Notices are also distributed to the local media outlets including the Journal Inquirer, Hartford Courant, Willimantic Chronicle and the Area Chamber of Commerce, and others as needed. When drought conditions and/or mandatory drought restrictions exist, additional platforms may be used to ensure all residents are apprised of the water supply status. When drought conditions and/or mandatory drought restrictions exist, additional platforms may be used to ensure all residents are apprised of the water supply status. Updates are continuously relayed to the public through this process as they become available and a dedicated web page is established for a summary of how the situation has progressed or changed between the time the Town received its initial notice, and the date of the

Action 3.6 Manage for Drought and Municipal Water Use

most recent update. This process continues until the Town receives notice that water availability has returned to desired levels, and/or any mandatory or voluntary drought restrictions have been lifted. At that time, the Municipal Office distributes a final update, notifying the public of the resolved status. In addition to these situational updates, the Town of Coventry maintains a number of water conservation resources on their website, which are updated by staff from the Office of Planning Development.

Municipal Water Conservation Practices

The Town of Coventry has a number of processes in place to conserve water, minimize usage, and leverage natural rain fall for town operations when possible. The Coventry Recreation and Public Works Departments actively monitor water usage on a monthly basis to reduce usage and identify potential areas for further conservation. A variety of water usage management tools are used by both departments including; lake level monitoring, monitoring controlled irrigation systems, and a variety of sensors, digital controls, and water restrictors to reduce usage and eliminate unintentional use in facility boilers, landscaping activities, restrooms, and kitchens. When a drought advisory is issued, water use for irrigation is reduced and activities that require water, (e.g. washing town vehicles) is discontinued.

Public Resources

- [CT Department of Public Health Drinking Water Division](#)
- [CT Department of Energy and Environmental Protection \(DEEP\)](#)
- [Town of Coventry Website](#)
- [Town of Coventry Plan of Conservation and Development*](#)
- [The Eastern Highlands Health District](#)
- [Planning and Public Works Staff](#)

**To be updated in 2024*

Sustainable CT Recertification
Action 3.6 Manage for Drought and Municipal Water Use

Develop a drought communications plan and update your municipal website with links to information about water conservation, drought information and status, which may be found on your local water utility website, local health district website, and state water status website.

Submit: A copy of your Drought Communications Plan and links on municipal website with utility and state drought information.

Links to information about water conservation:

Drinking Water: Innovations and Trends – CT Department of Public Health

https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/Departments-and-Agencies/DPH/dph/drinking_water/pdf/DPHQuickTipsFlyerInnovationTrends.pdf

CT DPH Fact Sheet – Could be used a social media posts – CT Department of Public Health

https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/Departments-and-Agencies/DPH/dph/drinking_water/pdf/DPHWaterConservationTipsandFactSheetFinal.pdf

Water Conservation Quick Tips – CT Department of Public Health

https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/Departments-and-Agencies/DPH/dph/drinking_water/pdf/DPHQuickTipsFlyerConservation.pdf

Region 1: EPA New England – U.S. Environmental Protection Agency

https://www3.epa.gov/region1/eco/drinkwater/water_conservation.html

Water Calculator to calculate how much water you use, compare and how you can conserve – Connecticut Water

[Water Calculator | Home Water Works \(home-water-works.org\)](http://www.home-water-works.org)

Drought Information and Status:

CT State Drought Information Center (includes status or “stage”, CT Interagency Drought Work Group meeting agenda and minutes, State press releases and drought information resources)

<https://portal.ct.gov/Water/Drought/Drought-Home>

U.S. Drought Portal (CT)

<https://www.drought.gov/drought/states/connecticut>

U.S. Drought Monitor (CT)

<https://droughtmonitor.unl.edu/CurrentMap/StateDroughtMonitor.aspx?CT>

Northeast Regional Climate Center

<http://www.nrcc.cornell.edu/regional/drought/drought.html>

Connecticut Drought Preparedness and Response Plan (2018)

<https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/Water/Drought/20181106statedroughtplanadopted.pdf>