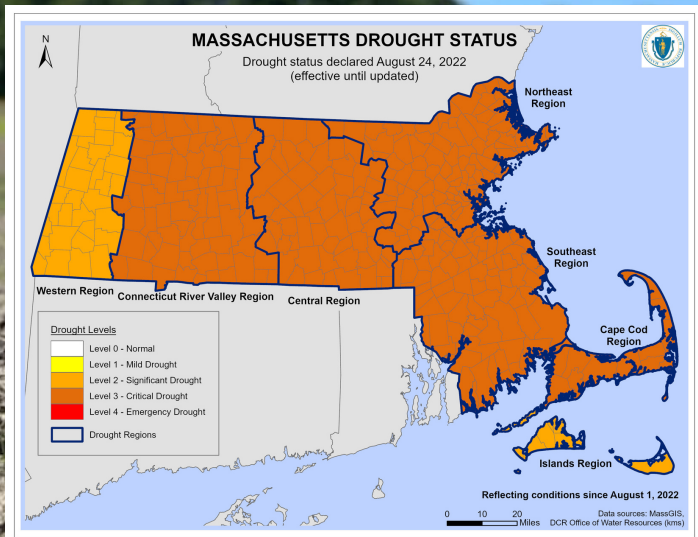


**Last year, Massachusetts experienced severe statewide drought.**

**It's the perfect time to pass the drought bill for more climate-resilient drought management.**

**H.861/S.475**

**Sponsored by Rep. Joan Meschino & Sen. Jamie Eldridge**



Municipal water conservation measures currently vary widely during drought, resulting in huge variation across watersheds. Some towns implement outright watering bans, others have only voluntary measures. **This patchwork of conservation measures only provides limited relief to rivers.**

The drought bill would change that by giving EEA the authority to require regional water conservation measures during a declared drought, affecting only nonessential outdoor watering, **as recommended in the state's 2019 Drought Management Plan.** Water use for agriculture or business would be exempt.

This would make watering rules consistent across neighboring municipalities, making rules easier to understand for the public, while **providing actual relief for our rivers, wildlife, and water supplies.**

## How Drought Impacts Massachusetts:

- Droughts make it harder for crops to grow, impacting our local agriculture. In 2016, MA farmers suffered **\$18 million** due to drought-related crop losses.
- In 2022 - the US Department of Agriculture declared 9 counties in Massachusetts "**natural disaster areas.**"
- Cranberry bogs, an iconic Massachusetts crop, are especially at risk of failure during drought.
- River herring, or alewives, that traditionally thrive in our streams struggle in low flows, sometimes resulting in fish kills.
- In 2016, five municipalities declared **water supply emergencies.**
- In October 2020 alone, rivers experienced **record low flows**, like the Three mile River in Dighton with a 54-year low, or the North Nashua River in Leominster with an 85-year low, which contributed to losses in tourism, recreation, and property value.

Our current approach to drought management is a confusing patchwork of conservation measures that have limited impact.

**Currently, the state does not have the authority to require water conservation during a drought until the Governor declares a drought emergency.** Climate change will only increase the frequency and severity of droughts - our state needs to have a better, coordinated response.

**With the drought bill, the state can be proactive in saving water during a drought, rather than waiting until an emergency strikes.**

**For more information, contact**  
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