

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

April 25, 2023

**DROUGHT WATCH ADVISORY DECLARATION**

*Drought watch advisory declared for 28 counties and 11 cities in Virginia*

**Richmond, Va.** — In response to existing conditions and to increase public awareness of the potential for a significant drought, the Virginia Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) has issued a drought watch advisory for five of the Drought Evaluation Regions within the Commonwealth.

Affected Drought Evaluation Regions and localities include:

- **Chowan:** Brunswick, Dinwiddie, Greensville, Lunenburg, Nottoway, Prince George, Southampton, Surry, and Sussex counties, and the cities of Emporia and Franklin.
- **Eastern Shore:** Accomack and Northampton counties.
- **Northern Coastal Plain:** Caroline, King George, King William, King and Queen, Essex, Richmond, Westmoreland, Gloucester, Mathews, Middlesex, Lancaster, and Northumberland counties.
- **Southeast Virginia:** Isle of Wight County, and the cities of Suffolk, Chesapeake, Norfolk, Portsmouth, and Virginia Beach.
- **York-James:** Charles City, James City, New Kent, and York counties, and the cities of Hampton, Newport News, Poquoson, and Williamsburg.

A drought watch advisory is intended to increase awareness of conditions and facilitate preparation for a drought when indicators in the [Drought Assessment and Response Plan](#) have been met. The interagency [Virginia Drought Monitoring Task Force](#) considered the following in establishing a drought watch advisory:

- Many of the affected areas have received less than half of normal precipitation within the last 60 days, with some areas receiving less than a quarter of normal precipitation over the past two weeks. Precipitation is predicted to remain below normal, with above normal temperatures over the next two weeks.
- Stream flows in these areas are below normal, and some monitoring locations are below the 10<sup>th</sup> percentile of historical normal values. High temperatures and low precipitation forecasted will continue to impact these regions in the near future.
- Groundwater levels have declined, and parts of the York-James, Middle James, Northern Virginia, and Roanoke regions have dropped below the 10<sup>th</sup> percentile.
- Very dry soil moisture conditions have been measured across the majority of the northern and eastern portions of the Commonwealth and have ranked in the lowest 5% of historic values across portions of these regions.

With this advisory, DEQ is working with local governments, public water works, and water users in the affected areas, and is requesting that they prepare for a drought by developing or reviewing existing water conservation and drought response plans. Virginians are requested to help protect current water supplies by minimizing water use, monitor drought conditions, and detect and repair leaks.

If conditions persist and a drought is imminent, a drought warning will be issued. Water conservation and contingency plans that are already in place or have been prepared during a drought watch stage would then be implemented.