

News Release

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U.S. Geological Survey

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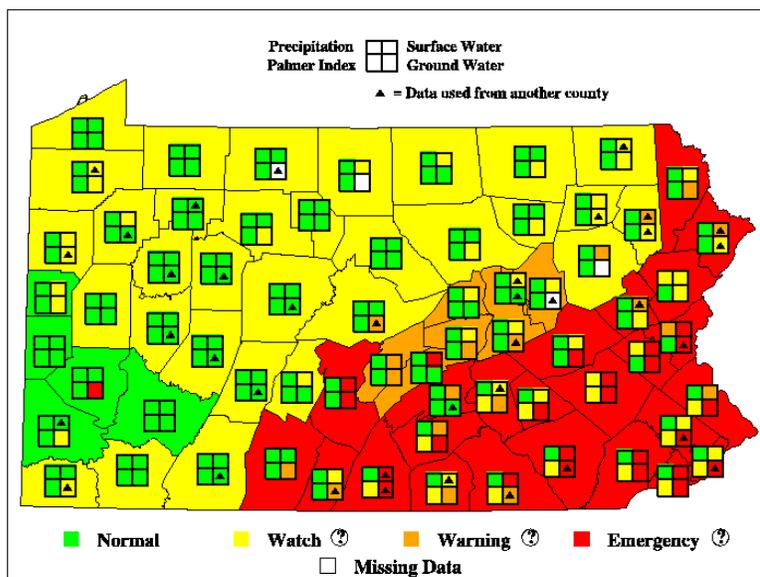
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Drought Conditions Continue Despite Recent Rain

Streamflows and ground-water levels improved somewhat as a result of the precipitation during the month of March but are returning to record low levels in some areas, according to the U.S. Geological Survey's (USGS) network of streamflow stations and ground-water observation wells used to monitor drought conditions throughout Pennsylvania.

At the end of the month of March, streamflow at nine of the 56 USGS streamflow stations used to monitor the drought, had 30-day average streamflows that were at the drought emergency level (below the 5th percentile). This is nine less stations than at the end of February. Water levels at 10 of the 41 wells used to monitor the drought had 30-day averages that were at the drought emergency level (below the 5th percentile). This is seven less wells than at the end of February. The sites still in a drought emergency status were located primarily in the Delaware and Lower Susquehanna River Basins, according to John Nantz, Information Specialist, at the USGS in New Cumberland, Pennsylvania.

Composite Indicator Map (Precipitation Based on 90-Day Departure)



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At the end of March, the 90-day departure from average precipitation in 63 of Pennsylvania's 67 counties was in the range considered to be normal (25 percent above to 25 percent below the 30-year average). In three of the remaining four counties, the departure was between 25 to 35 percent below the long-term average – indicating a drought watch condition and in the remaining county, the departure was between 35 to 45 percent below the long-term average – indicating a drought warning condition.

Despite the improvements in streamflow and ground-water levels at the end of March, the conditions at the USGS drought indicator sites appear to be returning to record low levels. More sites are expected to return to record low levels as days pass without precipitation.

Tracking streamflow and groundwater levels is essential to monitoring drought severity and recovery. Short-term rainfall will improve soil moisture and aid farmers, but only adequate rainfall over a period of time can replenish groundwater and streamflow and fill reservoirs. Together, these sources supply water to all public and private users throughout Pennsylvania

The real-time streamflow stations used in this analysis are operated in cooperation with other Federal agencies, the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection, and some local agencies. The observation wells used in this analysis are operated in cooperation with the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection. The USGS provides real-time data for 222 streamflow stations and 67 wells across Pennsylvania. For real-time data and other online water resources information for Pennsylvania go to <http://pa.water.usgs.gov/>

The U.S. Geological Survey is the Nation's largest water, earth and biological science, and civilian mapping agency providing reliable, impartial scientific information to resource managers, planners, and other customers. This information is gathered in every state by USGS scientists to minimize the loss of life and property from natural disasters, contribute to the sound conservation and the economic and physical development of the Nation's natural resources, and enhance the quality of life by monitoring water, biological, energy, and mineral resources.

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