

News Release

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Drought Watch declared for metropolitan Washington region

Water suppliers and regional government organizations ask residents to voluntarily conserve water.

ROCKVILLE, MD (June 3, 2026) – Earlier today the Drought Coordination Committee of the Metropolitan Council of Governments (COG) declared a Drought Watch for the metropolitan Washington region. This designation increases coordination, monitoring, and public communications among the organizations tasked with monitoring the water supply for our nation’s capital and the surrounding regions, which includes the Interstate Commission on the Potomac River Basin (ICPRB).

Authorities are asking for voluntary water conservation among residents and businesses in the region.

According to the U.S. Drought Monitor Map, 40 percent of the Potomac watershed is experiencing severe drought conditions or worse.

When declaring a drought, agencies consider several indicators, including precipitation, groundwater levels, streamflow, and reservoir levels.

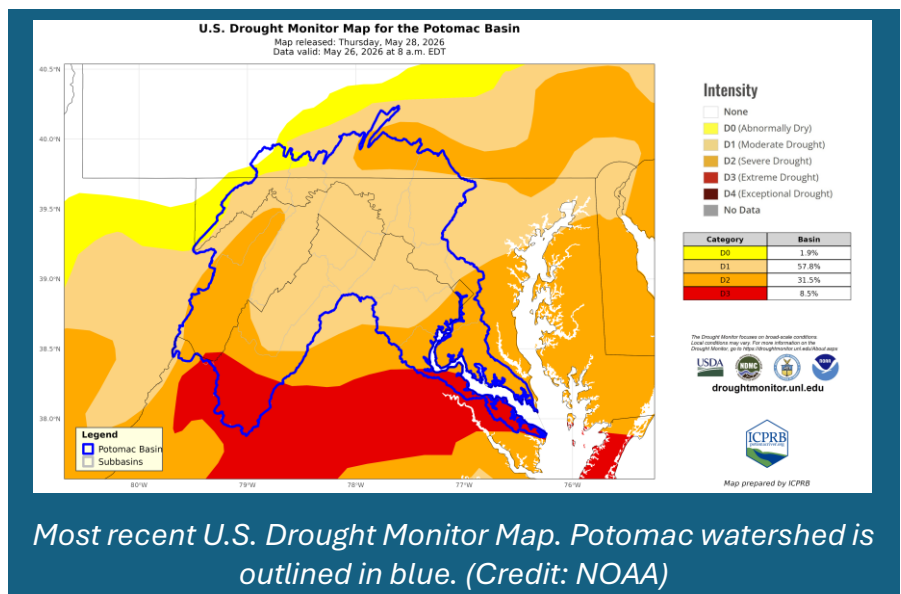
“Recent rains brought temporary relief from the area’s long dry spell that dropped the flow in the Potomac to 130-year lows for this time of year,” says ICPRB Executive Director Michael Nardolilli. “Since then, however, the rains have stopped.”

Rain in the region is 17 inches below average for the past two years, as reported by NOAA’s Regional Climate Center.

“The Washington metropolitan region benefits from a cooperative water supply system that includes upstream reservoirs designed to augment Potomac River flows when needed. Those reservoirs are currently over 99 percent full,” explains Dr. Alimatou Seck, Director of Operations for ICPRB’s Section for Cooperative Water Supply Operations on the Potomac (CO-OP), the department within ICPRB that monitors drought in the region. The most recent drought-related reservoir releases occurred in 1999, 2002, and 2010.

When the river drops below a certain level, CO-OP conducts daily [Drought Monitoring](#) by providing a daily report with weather forecast, river flow data, and regional water demand to regional stakeholders.

There are currently no mandatory water use restrictions in the metropolitan Washington region. The last time mandatory water use restrictions were instituted in the region was a Maryland-statewide declaration in 1999.



Most recent U.S. Drought Monitor Map. Potomac watershed is outlined in blue. (Credit: NOAA)

If conditions worsen, the next stage in the [regional drought response plan](#) is a Drought Warning, in which authorities will call for additional voluntary water use restrictions.

The ICPRB will continue to monitor the river's levels and coordinate with partners accordingly. Decades of planning and coordination ensure the region's water supply is well-protected from a water supply shortage.

"As we go into the summer and fall months, when river flows are typically lower, residents are urged to use water wisely," says Nardolilli, providing examples for ways to reduce water use:

- Prioritize your outdoor watering. Only water newly planted trees, shrubs, and lawns. A slow drip (versus a heavy pour) will allow the water to reach the root system and not run off the soil.
- Check faucets and toilets for leaks.
- Take short showers instead of baths.
- Run the dishwasher and laundry only when full.

Find more [Water Conservation Tips for the Summer](#) on COG's website.

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The ICPRB is an interstate compact commission established by Congress in 1940. Its mission is to protect and enhance the waters and related resources of the Potomac River basin through science, regional cooperation, and education. Represented by appointed commissioners, the ICPRB includes the District of Columbia, Maryland, Pennsylvania, Virginia, West Virginia, and the federal government.