

The Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) today announced the Commonwealth Drought Task Force has declared a drought watch for 36 counties and asks for voluntary water conservation in those counties. Berks County is among those included in the drought declaration. We urge residents to voluntarily reduce water use. There are many ways to conserve water at home, including:

- Run water only when necessary. Don't let the faucet run while brushing your teeth or shaving. Shorten the time you let the water run to warm up before showering.
- Run the dishwasher and washing machine less often, and only with full loads.
- Water your garden in the cooler evening or morning hours, and direct the water to the ground at the base of the plant, so you don't waste water through evaporation.
- Water your lawn only if necessary. Apply no more than 1 inch of water per week (use an empty can to determine how long it takes to water 1 inch). Avoid watering on windy and hot days. This pattern will encourage healthier, deeper grass roots. Over-watering is wasteful, encourages fungal growth and disease, and results in shallow, compacted root systems that are more susceptible to drought.
- When mowing your lawn, set the blades to 2-3 inches high. Longer grass shades the soil, improving moisture retention. It also grows thicker and develops a deeper root system, so it can better survive drought.
- Check for and repair household leaks. For example, a leaking toilet can waste up to 200 gallons of water daily.
- Sweep your sidewalk, deck, or driveway instead of hosing it off.
- Replace older appliances with high-efficiency, front-loading models that use about 30 percent less water and 40-50 percent less energy.
- Install low-flow plumbing fixtures and aerators on faucets.
- Set up a rain barrel to be ready to repurpose rain when it does fall. For information, see this [Penn State Extension guide](#).

Find more tips at the [U.S. Environmental Protection Agency](#)