

Town of Shelter Island Water Advisory Committee
Drought Condition Policy
(adopted September 2025)

Drought Status Categories

The Shelter Island Water Advisory Committee (“WAC”) will establish a drought status recommendation to the Town Board at each of its monthly meetings.

The WAC drought status categories are as follows:

Status: Normal/None - Drought conditions do not exist or are not anticipated in the foreseeable future.
Action: None

Status: D0 /Abnormally Dry
Action: Recommend voluntary water conservation measures.

Status: D1 /Moderate Drought
Action: Recommend voluntary conservation and possible modest mandatory restrictions on water use.

D2 Severe Drought
Action: Recommend significant mandatory water use restrictions.

D3 Extreme Drought
Action: Recommend broad use of mandatory emergency water use restrictions.

D4 Exceptional Drought
Action: Recommend broad use of mandatory emergency water use restrictions and any other reasonable measures to safeguard the water supply.

***The WAC may choose to add a fire warning to a drought status recommendation as the conditions may warrant.

While the drought status categories above use the same labels as those used by the Regional Northeast Early Warning System (DEWS), local factors such as well levels, precipitation and time of year may cause Shelter Island to declare a different status for the island from that declared by DEWS.

Factors in Determining the Current Drought Status

In formulating its recommendations, the WAC will review the following information and make a reasoned judgement on current and expected future conditions, including the impact of seasonal demand for water.

Factors used in establishing drought recommendations may include but are not limited to:

1. [Regional Northeast Drought Early Warning System \(DEWS\) intensity indicators](#)
2. Drought Severity report from [Northeast Regional Climate Center \(NRCC\)](#)
3. Recent USGS well water height readings at our 12 monitoring wells

General guidelines for drought status derived from well heights are as follows:

Normal: Average well heights are greater than the 30th percentile.

Guarded/ Abnormally Dry: Average well heights are greater than the 20th percentile but less than or equal to the 30th percentile.

Moderate Drought: Average well heights are greater than the 15th percentile but less than or equal to the 20th percentile.

Severe Drought: Average well heights are greater than the 10th percentile but less than or equal to the 15th percentile.

Extreme Drought: Average well heights are greater than the 5th percentile but less than or equal to the 10th percentile.

Exceptional Drought/Emergency: Average well heights are less than or equal to the 5th percentile.

***Note: the percentile is calculated using 2016 to present USGS well height readings for the given month.*

4. Local measurements of precipitation as captured by the WAC.
5. Historical trend analysis of well water height readings and precipitation.
6. NY State Drought Proclamations.

Drought Recommendation Procedure

1. A preliminary vote the WAC will be taken to determine a drought status recommendation and any recommended voluntary or mandatory water use restrictions that may accompany such determination.
2. Public comments will be permitted in connection with such determination.
3. A final vote will be taken by the WAC to determine the drought status recommendation and any recommended voluntary or mandatory water use restrictions that may accompany such determination.
4. If any new voluntary or mandatory restrictions are recommended or there are changes to existing restrictions, the WAC will prepare to memo to the Town Board formalizing such recommendations. Such memo will be forwarded to the Town Clerk and the Town Clerk will facilitate Town Board adoption and communicate back to the WAC when and if such recommendations are adopted.
 - Such memo shall include;
 - a. The stated drought status recommendation.
 - b. The newly recommended voluntary or mandatory water use restrictions.
 - c. The current National Drought Monitoring and DEWS drought status.
 - d. The well readings for the big 4 wells for the month and their percentile ranking versus historical readings, as well as an indication of other well conditions.
 - e. Any additional comments or observations to elaborate on the determinations.
 - f. The recommended messaging to the public and the recommended means communication to the public including but not limited to the Notify Me email system, posting on the Town website, electronic road signs the like.

POTENTIAL WATER USE RESTRICTIONS UNDER EMERGENCY AUTHORITY

GRANTED TO THE TOWN BOARD UNDER 82-12

Shelter Island Drought Condition Response Guide

The Shelter Island Town Board, on the recommendation of the Water Advisory Committee and/or requirements by New York State, may declare a Drought Condition and may implement some or all of the following restrictions at its discretion based on the severity of the drought. The Board may also use its authority to implement restrictions only in near-shore areas as deemed in the public interest.

A. LAWN IRRIGATION
A.1. Restriction on use of Automated well-sourced lawn irrigation systems. Watering time is reduced to 30 minutes per zone. Watering hours are between 6 p.m. and 8 a.m.
A.2. Restriction on use of hand held or hose sprinkler units using well-sourced water. Watering time is limited to 30 minutes per area. Watering hours are between 6 p.m. and 8 a.m.
A.3. Restriction on Installation of new sod or reseeded of lawns
* Penalty for violation per Irrigation Law Chapter 82
B. GARDENS AND LANDSCAPE AREAS
B.1. Restriction on the use of well-sourced automatic irrigation systems for residential irrigation of flower or vegetable gardens, landscaped area (e.g., trees, shrubs). Watering hours are between 6 p.m. and 9 a.m. Watering time is limited to 30 minutes per zone.
B.2. Restriction on the use of hand held or manually operated irrigation systems for residential irrigation of flower or vegetable garden, or landscaped area (e.g., trees, shrubs) Watering hours are between 6 p.m. and 9 a.m. Watering time is limited to 30 minutes per area.
B.3. Water may not be used to wash exterior surfaces such as sidewalks, driveways, garages, parking areas, decks and patios.
B.4. Restriction on Installation of new trees or shrubs
* Penalty for violation per Irrigation Law Chapter 82
C. POOLS/HOT TUBS
C.1. Prohibition of the use of Shelter Island well-sourced water to top-off pools including automatic top-off systems.
C.2 Evaporation prevention cover use if well sourced water is used for topping off pool
D. OTHER WATER REDUCTION CONSIDERATIONS
D.1. Discontinue the automatic serving of water at restaurants, customers must request water.
D.2. The use of water for the recharging operation of <i>non-essential</i> water treatment processes, including but not limited to water softeners and reverse osmosis units in applications where the untreated water is potable.
D.3. Limitations on washing any vehicle, car or boat
D.4. Restrictions for use of well-sourced water to maintain Har Tru tennis courts