

Date: 29 July 2026

Good afternoon,

Further to our letter dated 21 July 2026, the West Midlands has now formally moved into drought status. This means we are increasing our monitoring, working with partners to protect water supplies and the environment, and asking key stakeholders to help reinforce clear messages about responsible water use.

The Environment Agency has confirmed drought status in seven areas to help preserve the water needed for people, farming, business and the environment. More information can be found in our latest press release: [Drought declared in half of England - GOV.UK](#)

We are leading the national response to prolonged dry weather, working closely with water companies, government departments and other key partners.

Rainfall across the West Midlands remains exceptionally low, with no measurable rainfall recorded and continued pressure on water resources. River flows are widely below normal, with several catchments now at notably low or exceptionally low levels.

The Environment Agency is managing river flows through reservoir releases and groundwater schemes and is working with water abstractors to protect water supplies and the environment. Restrictions on water abstraction are being implemented where necessary.

Forecasts indicate that dry conditions are likely to continue. However, heavy rainfall on dry ground can still lead to rapid runoff and localised flooding, meaning flood risk can remain even during prolonged dry periods.

Our role

We have a statutory duty under the Water Resources Act 1991 to safeguard water resources in England and make sure there is enough water available for people and the environment.

We work with partners across the whole catchment, including Natural Resources Wales, water companies and other abstractors to monitor and manage water resources and take precautionary actions to ensure the needs of water users and the environment are met.

What action are we taking across the West Midlands?

We have a detailed drought plan that specifies the actions we need to take to reduce the impact of dry weather on the natural environment, and to oversee the actions water companies take to secure public water supplies

Supporting farmers, agriculture and abstractors

We're helping farmers navigate these challenging conditions by issuing irrigation forecasts, providing guidance on water efficiency, and facilitating water sharing between licence holders. For

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more information on how we are supporting the farming community, you can read our blog here: [How we are supporting farmers to manage the impacts of dry weather.](#)

Our hydrology experts continue to closely monitor river flows and groundwater levels to balance the needs of people, businesses and the environment. Existing abstraction licence controls, including hands-off flow (HOF) conditions, are being applied to limit water abstraction when rivers and groundwater fall below agreed thresholds. Currently, 461 of 606 HOF restrictions are in place, while the Canal & River Trust has introduced navigation restrictions in some areas to help conserve water supplies.

Our well-established drought plans help make the best use of available water while minimising impacts on communities, the environment, agriculture, industry and tourism.

Water companies

We meet regularly with water companies to ensure they are following their drought plans, including fixing leaks as quickly as possible and encouraging customers to reduce water use.

The Environment Agency closely monitors the River Severn and has a statutory responsibility to maintain river flows to meet water demand while protecting the natural environment. Where necessary, flows are supported using water from reservoirs and groundwater resources.

Hosepipe bans are a decision for water companies, but we expect them to take appropriate action in line with their drought plans. For more information: [Why do we have hosepipe bans during a drought?](#)

Impacts on the environment

Periods of dry weather and low river flows can have several consequences for the environment and wildlife. Low oxygen levels in water can lead to fish kills, as well as more algal blooms and lower river flows prevent wildlife from moving up or downstream.

We are monitoring water temperature and dissolved oxygen levels in the Severn, Wye and Avon to help identify and respond to risks to fish populations during hot, dry weather. Additional monitoring for algal blooms is also underway on the Wye and Lugg.

Fish rescue operations continue in the Teme and Redlake catchments, with around 360 brown trout and 250 Atlantic salmon rescued so far this season.

Dry weather and environmental incident reporting

Hot and dry weather conditions can cause or worsen environmental incidents, including fish in distress, fish becoming trapped in isolated pools due to low river flows, and the growth of blue-green algae.

We encourage members of the public to report environmental incidents to the Environment Agency via our 24-hour incident hotline: 0800 807060, or online at [Report an environmental problem - GOV.UK](#)

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Guidance for water abstractors

Information on best practice for efficient water use is available on GOV.UK:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/protecting-our-water-soil-and-air>

We encourage all abstractors to take the following steps now:

- Understand the risks that prolonged dry weather may pose to their water abstraction activities.
- Take steps to minimise impacts on both the environment and their business.
- Contact the Environment Agency as early as possible if they anticipate difficulties.
- Begin planning now for future dry weather conditions and next year's water requirements.

Use water wisely

We would appreciate your support in reinforcing messages from the Environment Agency, water companies, and other organisations encouraging everyone to use water responsibly and efficiently. Please consider sharing the below resources through your own networks, newsletters, websites and social media channels where appropriate:

- [Drought explained – Creating a better place](#) (Environment Agency blog)
- [Dry Weather Information 2025 | Engage Environment Agency](#)
- [Let's Save Water | Water Efficiency Campaign for England & Wales](#) - practical tips for saving water at home and in the workplace

Further information

If you have any questions about the current situation, please contact our West Midlands enquiry team at Enquiries_westmids@environment-agency.gov.uk

We will be keeping the situation under close review and will keep you updated.

Regards,

Suzanne Ward
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