

Make a difference – save water now

By Larry Bingaman

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HINGHAM - What a difference several months can make on water supplies when you consider that last June the Water Management Act and the low rainfall during the late spring and summer resulted in Aquarion imposing Mandatory Water Restrictions for customers in Hingham, Hull and north Cohasset. While water supply conditions have returned to normal, we must not be lulled into complacency. We should all start thinking now about how to reduce outdoor water usage during the upcoming spring and summer months to conserve a precious resource.

As we saw first hand, weather is directly linked to our well-being. In fact, nearly one-third of the U.S. economy is sensitive to weather and climate. Floods, droughts, hurricanes, tornadoes, tsunamis and other severe weather events affect the U.S. every year and can cause over \$11 billion in damages annually.

Factors such as snowmelt and rainfall are obvious contributors to the water supply of Aquarion's Hingham/Hull/north Cohasset service area. While public water supply is designed to cope with a few months of dry weather, prolonged periods of low rainfall coupled with high demands require careful management and even the imposition of outside water use restrictions to curb demands.

Last year, when Accord Pond was low there was concern about it being refilled in time for this year's heavier water use. While rainfall was below normal for March, so was the average daily demand for the month. The average daily system delivery during March was 2.75 million gallons per day (MGD), which is below the five-year average of 2.87 MGD. The cumulative effect of the greater than normal rainfall in recent months and lower demands has resulted in ground water and surface water conditions being normal for March. As expected, Accord Pond reached normal levels in February.

Meanwhile, Aquarion is committed to optimizing its water supply sources to help meet peak demands. Construction and tie-in of the Free Street #2 replacement well was completed in December and approved by the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection (MADEP) for operation. The redevelopment work will bring Free Street Well #2 back to its MA DEP approved withdrawal rate of 1.8 MGD, from the current level of 0.79 MGD. Construction of the Scotland Street and Fulling Mill replacement wells began earlier in 2008 with an expected completion of both projects in May. The replacement wells will return production to original MA DEP approved levels; the Scotland Street Well will increase from 0.71 MGD to

about 1.5 MGD and the Fulling Mill Wells will increase from 0.72 MGD to 1.3 MGD.

Although this redevelopment work will enable Aquarion to better meet the peak demands of summer, the MA DEP issued Water Management Act registration (WMA) for all of our sources of supply limits the average annual production to 3.51 MGD, even though the MA DEP approved safe yield of the supplies can produce as much as 6.68 MGD. What this means is while daily production might vary from the current 2.7 MGD to 5.5 MGD during the summer, the average daily production over the year must not exceed 3.51 MGD.

In order not to exceed our Water Management Act Registration limits, Aquarion staff monitors demand on a daily basis and through a computer model can project the year-end average daily production at any time. So when daily production is running at 5.0 MGD, we are constantly projecting the year end average daily production so not to exceed our WMA registration; if it appears that we might be too close to the limit, our phased outside water use restrictions program is implemented.

There is much customers can do now to conserve water and get ready for the warmer months. Indoors, actions can include fixing leaks, utilizing low-flow showerheads and sink aerators and installing low-flow toilets. Outdoors, water only when necessary. If you have an irrigation system, prepare for spring by testing the irrigation system for leaks, malfunctions and spray distribution. Clean the grit out of emitters for efficient spray. Adjust as needed for uniform distribution. Also, install a rain detector or moisture sensor so the irrigation system will not run when it rains or when the ground is moist.

Also visit Aquarion's Web site at aquarion.com/Massachusetts, where you can monitor precipitation levels and area weather conditions; and, by clicking on the conservation button you will be able to find under the Conservation for the Seasons 100 tips to conserve water year round and save money.

Aquarion is also a proud supporter of the Greenscapes South Shore program. This program provides smart tips on outdoor water usage and other water conservation programs. Visit their Web site at greenscapes.org for tips on how to save water and other conservation programs.

If we all do our part, there will be enough water for all our current every day needs.

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