

Greenwich's Water Supply: What I Need to Know Now

Updated for May 1, 2017

Where does our water come from?

Greenwich relies on both surface and groundwater sources for drinking water. Approximately 88% of our residents get their water from our public drinking water supply managed by the Aquarion Water Company. The other 12% are served by private wells.

The public drinking water supply is a surface water system that relies on a series of reservoirs to store water. The main reservoir is the Bargh Reservoir located in the Mianus River Watershed. Water is transferred from the Bargh to the Rockwood and Putnam Reservoirs where the main filtration plant is located. A smaller filtration plant is also located directly on the Mianus River. This system is referred to as the Greenwich System because of where the filtration plant is located. It should be understood that this system also serves Rye, Rye Brook, and Portchester and is also tied in to the Stamford and Greater Bridgeport systems. Aquarion, in coordination with the CT Dept. of Public Health manages the entire system for all residents in southwest CT.

Most of the private wells in Greenwich tap into groundwater that flows through cracks in the bedrock. This type of supply is known as a bedrock aquifer.

Is there enough water for all of us?

Southwestern Connecticut has always enjoyed adequate rainfall and an abundant water supply. In recent years, however, the demand for water has increased significantly as we build larger homes, create more lawns, add more pavement, and forget to practice water conservation. Winter use in Greenwich averages 10 mgd but jumps in the summer to well over 20 mgd because of outdoor water use. Demand can reach 32 mgd during hot, dry spells. On the supply side, rainfall events in our region have become increasingly flashy, with more intense storms often followed by extended dry periods. Given these conditions, our water resources must be managed carefully to ensure that we have a safe and adequate supply of drinking water. We also want to ensure that we have adequate water for fire protection and to maintain stream habitat streams. This is possible if everyone does their part to use water wisely every day, not just during a drought.

What are the existing water supply conditions?

Reservoir levels for the Greenwich system reached at 99.9% as of 4/10/2017 and continue to spill. This is very good news, however, we need to put this in perspective. Last year, the reservoirs were full and spilling in February but by July, we were seeing drastic drops in stream base flow. This is nothing new. In 2007, many will recall that there was major flooding on the Byram River and elsewhere in southwest CT in both March and April. By the end of summer, the Town was asking residents to restrict water usage. This flashy trend is the reason that Town, state and water company officials have kept an irrigation plan in place this spring. Records show that we are still approximately 10" below average rainfall over the past 365 days and this remains a concern for the long term. We continue to monitor not only reservoir levels but precipitation and stream flow levels closely, working with the Aquarion and the CT Dept. of Public Health to ensure that we have a safe and healthy supply this summer and beyond.

What restrictions are currently in place in Greenwich?

On April 27 20017, the Board of Selectmen rescinded the water ban and adopted water restrictions on all outdoor irrigation by automatic irrigation systems and sprinkler type equipment limiting watering to 2-day per week as follows:

Maximum Twice-Weekly Sprinkler Irrigation Schedule	
Last Digit of Your Address Number	Water Only On:
0, 2, 4, 6 or 8 (even numbers)	Sunday & Wednesday Before 10:00 am or After 6:00 pm
1, 3, 5, 7 or 9 (odd numbers)	Saturday & Tuesday Before 10:00 am or After 6:00 pm
No address number	Sunday & Wednesday Before 10:00 am or After 6:00 pm



These restrictions apply to residents and businesses served by both public water supply (Aquarion) or private wells.

Residents are now allowed to fill pools, wash cars etc but are asked to continue water conservation practices.

Are there any variances on the restrictions?

Both the Town and Aquarion recognize that, under certain circumstances, a variance to allow for watering outside to the restrictions may be needed. Examples include the establishment of a new lawn after construction or for large properties that may need to water in zones and cannot comply with the restrictions.

Aquarion will be handling all variances for customers they serve. Information can be found at <http://www.aquarion.com/CT/irrigation>

For all other residents, including those served by private wells or small systems, please send an email to Conservation@greenwichct.org or call 203-622-6461.

What is the Town doing to protect water supply in the future?

The Greenwich Conservation Commission and Dept. of Health, in coordination with State and water company officials, has developed a long-term strategy to put us on the path to resiliency. This involves looking at both supply and demand. Aquarion is working to increase the capacity of the southwest regional pipeline that brings water from the greater Bridgeport system and expects to have this completed in the next 2-3 years. On the demand side we are working to institutionalize water conservation. Similar to recycling, we need residents to practice good water conservation every day, not just during a drought. We have little control over rainfall but we do have control over demand. If we all practice water conservation every day, this will smooth out the water demand curve and avoid emergencies, even during a drought. The new water conservation strategy includes restrictions that limit irrigation to 2-days per week, and will also have a strong education and outreach component.

All residents and businesses are required to comply with the 2-day/week water restrictions. In our region, lawns do not need to be watered more than once or twice per week and they do not need to be watered before May 1st or after October 1st. Indeed, a deep watering once a week will promote deep roots and stronger, healthier lawns. Watering every day encourages shallow roots and unhealthy plants that are less resilient during the hot summer months.

To assist residents with this transition to a 2-day per week system and improve the overall health of their yards and landscape, the Conservation Commission will be holding a series of workshops for both homeowners and landscape contractors. Last year, the Commission began its leaf recycling program that focused on improving soil health in their lawns. This results in lawns that are healthier, need less water and nutrients, and more resistant to insects and disease. In addition, the Commission is providing free compost bins to residents, who have excess leaves and want learn how to compost on their property. [Click here for leaf recycling in Greenwich.](#) [Click here for more info on Water-Smart Landscaping](#)

What can I do now to practice water conservation?

- Follow the restrictions on water irrigation and remind your neighbors to do the same.
- Plan ahead for better water conservation and future droughts by practicing water smart landscaping design, improving soil health, and planting native drought tolerant plants.
- Practice good conservation measures at home:
 - Check for water leaks and fix plumbing as needed
 - Take short showers instead of baths
 - Sweep, don't hose down, the driveway
 - Shut off hose while washing cars, use a bucket
 - Do only full loads of dishes and laundry
 - Don't let water run - put a pitcher in the frig for cold water

For more information on Greenwich's water supply, please send inquires to Conservation@greenwichct.org. Or visit our website at [Greenwich Water Restrictions](#)