

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

Updated for September 2016

## **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.

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. Additionally, rainfall events in our region have become more 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 fish habitat in our streams. This is possible if everyone does their part to use water wisely everyday.

## **What are the existing water supply conditions?**

Currently the Town is in a Water Supply Emergency. Below average precipitation over the past months has resulted in moderate to severe drought conditions in our area. Rainfall deficit is 5" or greater for the year. Reservoir levels for the Greenwich system are at 31.4% as of 9/26/2016, groundwater levels are dropping and stream flows are below average. Coupled with excessive demand for outdoor

watering, conditions warrant mandatory action by the Town. We continue to monitor water levels closely, working with the Aquarion, the State of Connecticut, and USGS.

### **What is a drought?**

A drought is a period of unusually dry weather in a region where rainfall is normally expected. We experience drought conditions when the lack of rainfall impacts the water supply (hydrology) of an area. Droughts vary in intensity and duration depending on the water demand, the time of year, and other climatic conditions.

### **What is the Town doing now?**

The Town implemented its Water Shortage Ordinance at the Board of Selectmen meeting on September 22, 2016 restricting all outdoor water use. This includes all lawn and garden irrigation, washing of driveways, homes and vehicles, and operation of fountains. This restriction will be in force during the entire fall season. The Town's Water Supply Team is continually monitoring water supplies, weather forecasts, and assessing current fire danger. We are communicating daily with Aquarion Water Company on the status of the current supply, current demand, and actions being taken to ensure we have adequate water for domestic use and fire protection. We are communicating to all residents that need to severely reduce demand on the system by stopping all outdoor water use immediately. We are reviewing the Town's emergency plans and preparing for the possibility of continued drought and worsening conditions. The Town and Aquarion have asked the State of Connecticut to declare a Water Supply Emergency for this region to enable the emergency transfer of water from another water supply system. This is expected to be enacted before the end of September.

### **What can I do?**

- Immediately stop use of your outdoor irrigation system. Plan for shutdown of system for the season.
- Delay plantings until later in the fall if conditions improve so that no watering is required or until next spring.
- Practice good conservation measures at home:
  - Check for water leaks and fix plumbing as needed
  - Take short showers instead baths
  - Plan ahead for future droughts by improving soil health and planting native drought tolerant plants.

