

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

Updated for April 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?**

The Town is currently in the 3<sup>rd</sup> year of a drought and is still under a Water Supply Emergency Order that was issued by the CT Dept. of Public Health last September. It is not expected that the emergency order will be re-issued, however, this depend on conditions continuing to improve in April. Reservoir levels for the Greenwich system are at 99.9% as of 4/10/2017. 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 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 12" 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 March 9, 2017, the Board of Selectmen adopted revised water restrictions that placed a mandatory water ban on all outdoor irrigation by automatic irrigation systems and sprinkler type equipment. Residents are now allowed to fill pools, wash cars etc but are asked to continue water conservation practices. This is in keeping with the CT Dept. of Public Health Water Supply Emergency Order issued March 1, 2017.

Given current conditions, it is likely that the mandatory irrigation ban be lifted in early May as long as conditions continue to improve and will be replaced with a 2 day/week watering restrictions. The Board of Selectmen are expected to take this action up at their April 27, 2017 meeting.

### **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 strategy includes institutionalizing 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 will include restrictions that limit irrigation to 2-days per week, and will also have a strong education and outreach component.

A key component of practicing water conservation everyday will be the establishment of permanent restrictions on outdoor water irrigation. Once the irrigation ban is lifted, we will go into the new 2-day per week 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 1<sup>st</sup> or after October 1<sup>st</sup>. 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?**

- Follow the irrigation ban that currently in place.
- Delay plantings and reseeding until the irrigation ban is lifted.
- Practice good conservation measures at home:
  - Check for water leaks and fix plumbing as needed
  - Take short showers instead of baths
  - Plan ahead for future droughts by improving soil health and planting native drought tolerant plants.

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