

State calls for voluntary water conservation

By GRACE R. DOVE
Post Staff

Don't wash your car or side-walk.

Don't water your lawn.
Fix leaky pipes.

Although we're not yet in a full-blown drought, people who do these three simple things can help conserve water, according to the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Resources.

Below-normal rainfall over the past three months has prompted DER to urge residents to begin voluntary conservation measures.

Groundwater levels throughout the state show a "significant downward trend" since the end of June, although conditions don't yet call for any formal drought declarations, DER's deputy secretary for water management Caren E. Glotfelty said.

"Recent rainfall has helped out, but we could certainly use a good two to three days inches of gentle, soaking rain, spread out over several days," said meteorologist Hugh Johnson of the National Weather Service at Avoca. "The soil is very dry."

The area received 1.04 inches of rain in July and another 1.04 inches so far this month, Johnson said. Average rainfall is 3.79 inches for July and 3.32 inches for August.

DER's continuous monitoring of precipitation, soil moisture,

ground water and water levels in streams and reservoirs prompted the request, although conditions don't merit a formal drought declaration yet, Glotfelty said.

Formal drought declarations are usually made through the governor's office.

DER is asking residents to voluntarily reduce or eliminate car washing and watering of lawns, shrubbery and gardens, repair leaking pipes and fixtures and install water-saving plumbing fixtures.

Although the press release said that several public water suppliers have begun to restrict water use, the Back Mountain's water supplies are in good shape, according to Mike Coyle, director of General Waterworks, Inc.

Two weeks ago General Waterworks asked its customers to follow the same guidelines which DER just released.

In addition, it suggested an odd-even day sprinkling plan, in which homeowners having even house numbers water their lawns on even-numbered days, while people living in homes with odd numbers water their lawns on odd-numbered days.

"We haven't noticed a significant increase in water demand, which is very good," Coyle said. "We monitor the water level in our wells daily. So far they're in good shape, partially due to the extremely wet period this spring."

Crops

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This year they have harvested 30. The dairy cattle are fed hay purchased locally; the supplier told Sutton that he'll have enough bales for the coming winter.

Hillside's corn matured three weeks early due to the dry weather and the ears are small, Sutton said. He hopes to harvest enough but isn't sure yet.

"This rain will sure help, but it hasn't been fun," he said.

Norman Darling, whose farm on Hildebrandt Road is well-known for its produce, said that he lost a field of cabbage seedlings right after they had been planted.

Although the lack of rain has affected his tomatoes, peppers and beans, Darling said that his other crops have made it so far.

"I can't irrigate up here," he said. "There isn't enough water. I can't do anything about the dry weather. You just take what's given you."

Larry Brace, owner of Brace's Orchards in Franklin Township, said that his peaches are much smaller due to the prolonged dry weather.

"I don't have enough of a water supply to irrigate," he said. "I tried to do what I could, a few trees at a time."

Brace said that his apples wouldn't be a total loss, although the early varieties are very small.

He has been able to salvage many of them for cider. Several weeks ago he had been concerned that they might be too small to harvest, but recent rain made a difference.

"If the rain keeps up, the later apples will probably be okay," he said.

At Yalick's Farm Market, Mrs. Yalick said that she knows farmers who have had to irrigate their fields to supplement the little rain which has fallen.

She said that an apple farmer from Berwick told her that his apples were falling off the trees from the lack of moisture.

"You put so much money into your crops and don't get anything out of it," she said.

Gerald Naugle, owner of a 2-1/2 acre "pick it yourself" blueberry farm with 2,300 bushes, said that irrigating his crop helped save more than 60 percent of it.

"The berries that grew in are nice and sweet, ready to go," he said.

"The farmers are hurting," said Luzerne County Agricultural Extension Agent Donna Gray. "Many farmers are reporting only half the yield that they usually get for this time of year. Since there hasn't been a second crop of hay, hay and field corn yields are only half of what they should be."

Blueberry yields are down and raspberries dried up right on the stem, Ms. Gray said.

She added that both drought in Pennsylvania and flooding in the Midwest, a second major source of livestock feed, could eventually drive feed prices up.

Wish trip

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remission, Mrs. Yanchik said. Although he occasionally becomes tired, Mark plays T-ball and soccer with his friends, who have been very supportive.

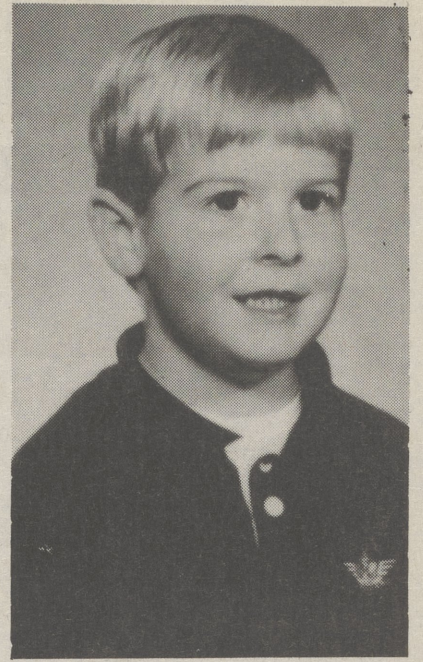
He is in first grade at the Lehman-Jackson Elementary School, where Ashley is a fourth-grader.

When Make-a-Wish first contacted the family, they were thrilled. "I still can't describe how we felt," Mrs. Yanchik said. She later found out that a family friend, Millie Loughrey of Nanticoke, had turned Mark's name in to the group.

While at Disney World, the family will stay at Kids' World, a hotel specially designed for children with life-threatening or terminal illnesses. Make-a-Wish will also provide an allowance for the family during their visit.

Always very positive about his illness, Mark is now ecstatic that his wish to visit the Magic Kingdom will soon be granted.

He recently told his mother, "If I make the height requirement,



MARK YANCHIK

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Congregation

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as soon as the building is ready.

The building marathon will begin Monday morning, August 30, when an army of volunteers transforms a pile of lumber and bricks into a finished building in four days.

Working around the clock, building, roofing, electrical, plumbing, and finishing crews supervised by skilled tradesmen will have the new Kingdom Hall finished and ready for a building committee meeting Sunday, September 5, and an appointment with the building inspector Monday, September 6.

Hiring a contractor to erect a similar building would have cost approximately \$400,000 according to publicity chairman Clare Mabus, who esti-

imated that using the "Quick-Build" method and volunteers saves more than half of the construction costs.

The "Quick-Build" method of construction was developed in response to the need for a large number of Kingdom Halls to be built cost-effectively and quickly by the Jehovah's Witnesses in Canada. It was later adopted by congregations in the United States, where the Jehovah's Witness faith is one of the fastest-growing religions, Mabus said.

"We never have a strike and no one complains about the pay," he joked. "This shows what can be accomplished in a short time when people work together."

Water rates

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jumped 62 percent, from an average \$69 to \$111.15. Noxen water customers' average bills rose 32 percent, from \$59.25 to \$78.25, while Shavertown water customers paid an additional six percent of an average \$104.75, up from \$99.25.

The total impact of the rate decrease will not be felt until customers have a full quarter of service under the new rates, the press release said.

General Waterworks manager Mike Coyle called the rate decrease a "rate equalization" between the two water companies, explaining that they help spread the cost of improvements over a larger customer base and minimize the impact on any one customer.

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