

Emergency Drought Assistance to Low-Income Residential Well Owners
New Hampshire Department of Environmental Services

Approved by the Drinking Water and Groundwater Advisory Commission October 23, 2020

**Total Allocation from the Drinking Water & Groundwater Trust Fund: \$1,500,000, approved
October 15, 2020**

Purpose

The purpose of this initiative is to provide short-term relief and financial assistance for low-income New Hampshire homeowners served by residential wells that are experiencing insufficient water or no water due to drought conditions. N.H. Dept. of Environmental Services (“NHDES”) will administer this program on behalf of the N.H. Drinking Water and Groundwater Advisory Commission (“Commission”) in the manner provided herein.

Note: There is currently a significant backlog of homeowners who have contacted NH drilling contractors requesting drought mitigation for their wells. This assistance will not increase the speed at which a drilling contractor can respond. However, by providing bottled water and offering financial assistance selected on the basis of household income, this initiative will support the state’s citizens hardest hit by the drought.

Eligibility

A homeowner is eligible to receive assistance only for the homeowner’s primary residence, only when the homeowner demonstrates that the primary residence lacks a safe or reliable source of drinking water due to drought, and only in the manner described below. NHDES reserves the right to determine whether payment should be made under this program in a manner consistent with directives from the Commission. All funding is contingent upon the availability of funds and NHDES or the Commission may prioritize projects for funding if funding is not available for all projects. Homeowner wells that are failing due to their use to provide water for non-essential outdoor activities (landscape, livestock, etc.) or for construction of a well on a lot or property where a well does not already exist are *not eligible*. Homeowners may request assistance under the program by filing an application provided by NHDES and the Commission. NHDES will verify eligibility prior to calculating possible assistance.

Low-Income Eligibility Criteria

Emergency drought assistance may be available for eligible residential well owners who meet either of the following low-income criteria thresholds:

Tier 1: Applicant’s household income is at or below \$37,028.50, which is 50% of the NH statewide average⁽¹⁾.

Tier 2: Applicant’s household income is at or below the income criterion based on the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) guidelines and presented in Attachment A.

¹ The NH statewide average median household income (MHI), \$74,057, is based on the 2014-2018 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates.

Drought Mitigation Actions

1. Short-term provision of water for eligible households with insufficient water due to drought.

For those eligible homeowners who do not have drinking water and are at or below the income criteria presented in Attachment A, NHDES will initiate bottled water delivery through the statewide contract to provide short-term relief while they are in the queue to have their well improved or replaced. The Commission authorizes NHDES to utilize the statewide contract for this purpose⁽²⁾.

2. Improving or Replacing Residential Wells with Insufficient Water Due to Drought

Financial assistance may be made available for qualifying low-income homeowners through a grant from the N.H. Drinking Water and Groundwater Trust Fund (“DWGTF”) for improving or replacing a residential well with insufficient water due to drought. Funding assistance may be available for eligible homeowners as described below:

- Tier 1 - If the household income for the homeowner is **at or below \$37,028.50**, they are eligible for financial assistance for the total cost of the drought mitigation action **minus a \$250.00 deductible** to improve or replace a residential well. NHDES will work with the contractors to establish a method whereby such contractors may invoice the homeowner only for the \$250 and seek the balance directly as a grant from NHDES.
- Tier 2 - If the homeowner is **at or below the income criteria presented in Attachment A for their area**, they are eligible for financial assistance for 50% of the total cost to improve or replace a residential well.

Eligible costs include, but are not limited to:

- Providing temporary auxiliary storage tank and bulk water by the drilling contractor;
- Increasing storage;
- Lowering the existing well pump;
- Deepening an existing well; and,
- Installing a replacement well.

Additionally, once the work is completed, all wells must be sampled and tested for the water quality parameters presented in Attachment B by a NH accredited laboratory. The laboratory costs for testing the parameters presented in Attachment B are eligible. However, the provision of drought assistance does not guarantee the quality or quantity of water associated with the work funded by this grant, and costs to add treatment are not eligible costs.

3. Connection to an Existing Community Water System

Financial assistance may be made available for qualifying low-income homeowners through a grant from the DWGTF for construction of a service connection to a community water system to replace a residential well with insufficient water due to drought. Funding assistance may be available for eligible homeowners as described below:

² The Commission previously authorized NHDES to utilize this contract to address contamination issues.

- Tier 1 - If the household income for the homeowner is **at or below \$37,028.50**, they are eligible for financial assistance for the total cost of the drought mitigation action **minus a \$250.00 deductible** to construct a service connection to a community water system. NHDES will work with the contractors to establish a method whereby such contractors may invoice the homeowner only for the \$250 and seek the balance directly as a grant from NHDES.
- Tier 2 - If the homeowner is **at or below the income criteria presented in Attachment A for their area**, they are eligible for financial assistance for 50% of the total cost to construct a service connection to a community water system.

Eligible costs include, but are not limited to:

- Designing and permitting the connection to a nearby community water system;
- Installing a service connection to a nearby community water system; and,
- Installation of the connection of the indoor system to the new service connection.

Cost of monthly usage fees are not eligible. The cost to provide a service connection to an existing community water system may not exceed \$15,000.

NHDES Grant Administration

1. The homeowner or licensed contractor will submit the eligibility application signed by both the homeowner and the licensed contractor which includes verification that the well issues are drought-related and information needed for low-income determination. NHDES will determine eligibility and the financial assistance amount the homeowner may receive.
2. If the homeowner is eligible and requests bottled water service, NHDES may initiate a delivery at no cost to the homeowner through the statewide contract.
3. NHDES may pay contractors directly in accordance with the provisions described above.
4. To receive payment, the contractor will be required to submit documentation of the work, the well installation report, the total cost in a manner that accounts for the 50% or \$250 payment due from the homeowner, and other reasonable documentation as required by NHDES.

Effective Date: Retroactive to June 23, 2020

Sunset Date: The emergency drought assistance in each county expires when the county and all contiguous counties in New Hampshire and/or bordering states have had no drought classification (D1 to D4) designated for four consecutive weeks or available funding has been exhausted³. Eligible homeowners who have submitted their application to NHDES prior to the described date above will be provided assistance until the work is completed.

Waiver: The Commission, in its discretion, may waive any of these provisions if granting the waiver will result in circumstances that better fulfill the purpose and intent of the initiative described above or if strict adherence to the provision being waived would not be in the best interest of the public, the

³ Drought classifications are published in the U.S. Drought Monitor which is produced through a partnership between the National Drought Monitor Center at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, the United States Department of Agriculture, and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration.

environment, or the Drinking Water and Groundwater Trust Fund program. The Commission may designate a Subcommittee to approve or deny waivers on their behalf.

ATTACHMENT A

Tier 2 Income Criteria for Emergency Drought Assistance To Low-Income Residential Well Owners

COUNTY ⁽²⁾	HOUSEHOLD SIZE ⁽¹⁾					
	1 PERSON	2 PERSON	3 PERSON	4 PERSON	5 PERSON	6 PERSON
BELKNAP	\$ 59,246	\$ 59,246	\$ 61,450	\$ 68,250	\$ 73,750	\$ 79,200
CARROLL	\$ 59,246	\$ 59,246	\$61,450	\$68,250	\$ 73,750	\$ 79,200
CHESHIRE	\$ 59,246	\$ 59,246	\$ 62,300	\$ 69,200	\$ 74,750	\$ 80,300
COOS	\$ 59,246	\$ 59,246	\$ 61,450	\$ 68,250	\$ 73,750	\$ 79,200
GRAFTON	\$ 59,246	\$ 59,300	\$ 66,700	\$ 74,100	\$ 80,050	\$ 86,000
HILLSBOROUGH	\$ 59,246	\$ 60,250	\$ 67,800	\$ 75,300	\$ 81,350	\$ 87,350
^(a) Nashua MSA	\$ 59,246	\$ 62,800	\$ 70,650	\$ 78,500	\$ 84,800	\$ 91,100
^(b) Manchester MSA	\$ 59,246	\$ 59,246	\$ 61,450	\$ 68,250	\$ 73,750	\$ 79,200
MERRIMACK	\$ 59,246	\$ 59,246	\$ 64,250	\$ 71,350	\$ 77,100	\$ 82,800
ROCKINGHAM	\$ 59,246	\$ 62,750	\$ 70,600	\$ 78,400	\$ 84,700	\$ 90,950
^(c) Boston MSA	\$ 67,400	\$ 77,000	\$ 86,650	\$ 96,250	\$ 103,950	\$ 111,650
^(d) Lawrence MSA	\$ 59,246	\$ 62,750	\$ 70,600	\$ 78,400	\$ 84,700	\$ 90,950
^(e) Western Rockingham	\$ 59,246	\$ 62,800	\$ 70,650	\$ 78,500	\$ 84,800	\$ 91,100
^(f) Portsmouth-Roch MSA	\$ 59,246	\$ 62,800	\$ 70,650	\$ 78,500	\$ 84,800	\$ 91,100
STRAFFORD	\$ 59,246	\$ 62,800	\$ 70,650	\$ 78,500	\$ 84,800	\$ 91,100
SULLIVAN	\$ 59,246	\$ 59,246	\$ 61,450	\$ 68,250	\$ 73,750	\$ 79,200

October 2020

Notes:

1. Income criterion is based on U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) guidelines and the average statewide Median Household Income (MHI). For county and household sizes with a MHI below 80% of the statewide average, the calculated value of 80% of the statewide average MHI, \$59,246, has been substituted for the HUD criteria. This change is reflected in the table as a larger font size where applicable. The HUD income criteria presented are 80% of the area MHI. The NH statewide average MHI is based on the 2014-2018 American Community Survey 5-year estimates.
2. Income Limits shown are for the entire county or for towns included in a separate Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA) within a particular county.
 - a. Amherst, Brookline, Greenville, Hollis, Hudson, Litchfield, Mason, Merrimack, Milford, Mont Vernon, Nashua, New Ipswich, Pelham, Wilton
 - b. Bedford, Goffstown, Manchester, Weare
 - c. Seabrook, South Hampton
 - d. Atkinson, Chester, Danville, Fremont, Hampstead, Kingston, Newton, Plaistow, Raymond, Salem, Sandown, Windham
 - e. Auburn, Candia, Deerfield, Londonderry, Northwood, Nottingham
 - f. Brentwood, East Kingston, Epping, Exeter, Greenland, Hampton Falls, Kensington, New Castle, Newfields, Newington, Newmarket, North Hampton, Portsmouth, Rye, Stratham

NHDES

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ATTACHMENT B

Eligible Water Quality Testing Parameters⁽¹⁾

Upon completion of drought mitigation actions associated with improvements or replacement of the existing well, all wells must be sampled for the following water quality parameters. The laboratory costs for parameters listed below are eligible project costs⁽²⁾.

Arsenic	Bacteria (Total Coliform and E.coli)
Chloride	Copper (both stagnant and flushed)
Fluoride	Hardness
Iron	Manganese
Nitrate/Nitrite	pH
Radon	Sodium
Uranium	Lead (both stagnant and flushed)

Notes:

1. The list of water quality parameters is recommended by New Hampshire Department of Environmental Services for private well users and home buyers. For additional information, please visit the NHDES website: <https://www.des.nh.gov/organization/divisions/water/dwgb/nhelap/index.htm>
2. For the laboratory costs to be eligible, the analyses must be performed by a laboratory accredited through the New Hampshire Environmental Laboratory Accreditation Program. The NHDES website has an accredited laboratory search available at <http://www4.des.state.nh.us/CertifiedLabs/Certified-Method.aspx> and a list of accredited laboratories providing well water quality testing services in new Hampshire at <https://www.des.nh.gov/organization/divisions/water/dwgb/nhelap/documents/labs-private-wells.pdf>.