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Burke County Water Customers Continue Conservation Efforts as Stage 2 Water Restrictions Remain in Place

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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BURKE COUNTY, NC — Burke County Water customers are continuing to make a difference as the Catawba-Wateree River Basin remains in Low Inflow Protocol Stage 2.

Following the October 1 update from the Catawba-Wateree Drought Management Advisory Group, Stage 2 Mandatory Water Restrictions remain in place for Burke County Water customers.

Burke County Government and the Catawba-Wateree Water Management Group want to thank customers for the steps they have already taken to reduce water use during this drought. Cutting back on non-essential water use helps reduce stress on the regional water system, and those efforts matter.

The latest update shows some encouraging signs. Reservoir storage has improved over the past few weeks and is now at 94.9% of the target. The 3-month average of the U.S. Drought Monitor has also improved to 0.21. Both numbers are good news and show the basin is moving in the right direction.

However, streamflow remains the reason Stage 2 restrictions must stay in place. The 6-month average streamflow is currently at 48.8% of the long-term average. While that is a 2.5% improvement since mid-September, it still remains too low to lift Stage 2 water restrictions under the Low Inflow Protocol. Because reservoir storage and drought conditions have improved, and even though the 6-month streamflow average would support Stage 3 restrictions, the basin remains in Stage 2 instead of moving into a more restrictive stage. Streamflow matters because it helps sustain reservoirs over time. Rainfall can raise creek and river levels for a short period, but when the smaller streams, creeks, and branches that feed the Catawba River drop back below normal after the rain ends, the water system has not fully recovered. That is what we are still seeing across the basin.

Recent rainfall has helped, but the area still needs more widespread, soaking rain over time to bring streamflow's back to healthier levels. Until that happens, we cannot reduce water restrictions.

Burke County Water is a purchase-water system supplied by the City of Morganton, the Town of Valdese, and the City of Hickory. Burke County will continue working with those water suppliers and regional partners to monitor rainfall, reservoir levels, streamflow, drought conditions, water withdrawals, and overall demand.

“We want to thank Burke County Water customers for continuing to take this seriously,” said Burke County General Services Director Mark Delehant. “People have cut back, and that has helped. We are seeing improvement, and we are slowly moving in the right direction.”
“The challenge is streamflow,” Delehant said. “Reservoir storage has improved, and the drought monitor has improved, but the streams and creeks that feed the system are still not where they need to be. Until we see more recovery there, we need customers to continue using water wisely.”

Stage 2, identified as Mandatory Reductions I under Burke County’s Water Shortage Response Plan, requires Burke County Water customers to reduce water use by at least 10% compared to normal use.

The following mandatory restrictions remain in effect:

- Lawn and landscape irrigation is limited to twice per week, no more than 0.50 inch per week, and only between 8:00 p.m. and 8:00 a.m.

- Use of water from public water systems for washing driveways, sidewalks, and other impervious surfaces is prohibited.

- Residential vehicle washing is not allowed.

- Use of water for certain testing and training activities may be limited.

These restrictions are in place to protect the water supply for essential needs, including drinking water, sanitation, public health, and fire protection.

Failure to comply with Stage 2 restrictions may result in enforcement action. Violations may lead to a warning, followed by fines and possible service disconnection for repeated non-compliance.

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Burke County officials will continue to monitor conditions and provide updates as needed. Restrictions may be reduced when the regional water supply indicators improve enough to support a lower stage. Customers are encouraged to continue fixing leaks, limiting outdoor water use, reducing unnecessary water consumption, and using water wisely.

For additional information regarding current water restrictions and conservation tips, please contact Burke County Water/Sewer at 828-764-9063 or visit the Burke County Water Shortage Response Plan on the County website.

Our website for updates is: https://www.burkenc.org/DocumentCenter/View/206/Burke-County-Water-Shortage-Response-Plan-PDF-?bidId=

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