

# **WATER MANAGEMENT ALLIANCE**

# **DROUGHT POLICY**

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## **OPERATIONS**

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**Review date: September 2024**

**To be reviewed every 3 years**

**Next review date: September 2027**

**Reviewed by: WMA Consortium Management Committee**

### **Adopted by:**

Broads Internal Drainage Board

East Suffolk Internal Drainage Board

King's Lynn Internal Drainage Board

Norfolk Rivers Internal Drainage Board

South Holland Internal Drainage Board

Waveney, Lower Yare and Lothingland Internal Drainage Board

Pevensey and Cuckmere Water Level Management Board

## **DROUGHT POLICY**

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## **DROUGHT POLICY**

### **1. INTRODUCTION**

Several organisations and groups have important roles in managing drought and the WMA Member Boards plan to work with these organisations to help manage and overcome drought issues, particularly in light of future climatic changes.

By working with Natural England, the Environment Agency, Defra, the National Drought Group (NDG), the Association of Drainage Authorities (ADA) and others, the WMA Member Boards will seek to influence government policies for agriculture and water management to ensure drought is considered and managed.

WMA Member Boards will always aim to manage their hydraulic catchment effectively, to provide water availability throughout the year for landowners, stakeholders, and the environment, whilst meeting our statutory obligations. During drought periods WMA Member Boards will be prepared to heighten surveillance of water levels within their catchments and to closely coordinate with landowners, professional partners, and other stakeholders to regulate water during these times.

### **2. DROUGHT**

Droughts are natural events which occur when a period of low rainfall creates a shortage of water supplies to different users. Droughts can affect rivers, waterbodies, aquifers, or regions depending on when and where the lack of rainfall occurs.

It is the Environment Agency who will formally declare a drought, at which point more specific actions, plans and procedures will formally be triggered.

### **3. THE RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE WMA MEMBER BOARDS AND HOW THE ISSUE OF DROUGHT WILL BE MANAGED**

The WMA Member Boards will seek to work in partnership with key stakeholders, to help facilitate the management of water resources in times of drought. However, it is important to note that the board cannot be held liable for the quality or quantity of water available during a drought period.

In close liaison with landowners, Natural England and the Environment Agency, the WMA Member Boards will:

- Ensure staff react effectively during a drought event by contacting relevant statutory authorities.
- Provide local monitoring of key factors when required, such as dissolved oxygen, conductivity, and temperature to provide information to statutory authorities when certain environmental thresholds are exceeded or fail to be attained.

## **DROUGHT POLICY**

- Aim to prioritise water to mitigate environmental harm; this includes the short-term impacts to statutory sites and habitats of principal importance to safeguard protected flora and fauna.
- Optimise the use of infrastructure and specific pump operation, to maintain higher water levels or optimise available water resources throughout a drought period, e.g., reduce pumping, utilise variable speed drives or water control structures.
- Be prepared to dedicate resources to review drought events and how catchments have reacted, such that future infrastructure projects can be designed effectively with drought events in mind.
- Be prepared to work with our strategic partners to plan, prepare, assess, and be involved in future plans for a drought resilient catchment.

## **4. REVIEW**

This policy will be reviewed tri-annually and/or after any drought event. The review process will include an examination of the performance of the WMA Member Boards in meeting their goals, as well as discussions with other risk management authorities and representative bodies regarding previous experience across the sector.