

DROUGHT POLICY

Introduction

Our Member IDBs will need to manage water levels within their areas of responsibility during periods of drought; ensuring landowners, nature conservation groups and other interested parties have access to as much non-potable water as possible during these times. We aim to help manage the hydraulic catchment as a whole so that water will be readily available throughout the year for people and the environment.

This policy:

1. Explains what is meant by drought
2. Outlines the key responsibilities of the WMA Member Boards and describes how drought issues will be managed along with our short and long term goals
3. Outlines the role of education and communication (nationally and locally)

1.0 Drought

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

2.0 The responsibilities of the WMA Member Boards and how the issue of drought will be managed

The Water Management Alliance (WMA) and its Member Boards will seek to work in partnership with their partners and key stakeholders, to help manage water resources in times of drought. However it is important to note that the Board cannot be held liable for water quality, particularly in a drought period when the quality of the water is often worse. Water users must therefore always satisfy themselves that the water is of sufficient quality before abstracting/irrigating etc.

2.1 Short Term Goals

In close liaison with Natural England and other environmental management organisations (RSPB, Wildlife Trusts, etc.), the WMA Member Boards will;

- Wherever possible, through the use of infrastructure and specific pump operation, maintain higher water levels during the summer months, especially through a drought period.
- Aim to prioritise water to be pumped to SSSIs, SACs, and SPAs to safeguard protected flora and fauna.
- Aim to increase water levels by not pumping during times of drought in agricultural areas before hands-off-flow is instigated. This is to ensure farmers can irrigate their land during these times.

2.2 Long Term Goals

In close liaison with Natural England and other Risk Management Authorities, the WMA Member Boards will;

DROUGHT POLICY

- Aim to remain at the forefront of pump technology and river maintenance techniques, to enable us to manage water in the most efficient way.
- Manage our watercourses in such a way that, as much as possible, we safeguard against drought in the most vulnerable locations, through the use of structures, maintenance operation selection and other methods of surface water retention.
- Work with partners and landowners to deliver projects which benefit water flow.

3.0 Education and Communication (Nationally and Locally)

3.1 Nationally

A number of organisations and groups have important roles in managing drought and the WMA Member Boards plan to work together with these groups to combat issues of drought.

By working with Natural England, the Environment Agency, Defra, the National Drought Group (NDG), the Association of Drainage Authorities (ADA) and others, we will seek to influence government policies for farming, agriculture and water management to ensure drought as an issue is managed and taken in to account.

The WMA Member Boards will do this by:

- Attending meetings about water management involving drought.
- Liaising with flood risk management authorities and NGOs about drought.
- Promoting good working methods for water management across our Member Boards.
- Sharing ideas about good water management and how it can be achieved at national forums.
- Trialling new projects and collecting and sharing the results, in order to better inform the industry knowledge on drought.
- Raising funds with other organisations and working in partnerships to carry out projects.

3.2 Locally

The WMA Member Boards will work locally to offer advice and ensure there is an appreciation of the challenges that drought can pose, as well as the local measures which individuals can take to minimise its effects.

WMA Member Boards will do this by:

- Participating in joint events with key organisations.
- Being open to meet with local communities, farmers and interested parties.
- Including drought in any educational events at local schools and colleges.
- Advertising successful projects in the media.

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 lessons learnt across the sector.