

WATER MANAGEMENT ALLIANCE

DROUGHT POLICY

OPERATIONS

Review date: September 2021

To be reviewed every 3 years

Next review date: September 2024

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

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

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 farming, agriculture and water management to ensure drought is considered and managed.

WMA Member Boards will heighten surveillance to manage water levels within their catchments during periods of drought; coordinating with landowners, professional partners and other stakeholders, to regulate water during these times. We aim to manage the hydraulic catchment as a whole to provide water availability throughout the year for landowners, stakeholders and the environment, whilst meeting our statutory obligations.

This policy:

- Explains what is meant by drought.
- 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.

2. 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.

3. 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 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 poor or in short supply. Water users must therefore always satisfy themselves that the water is of sufficient quality before abstracting/irrigating etc.

3.1. Short Term Goals

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

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- Provide localised benefit; staff will actively monitor Dissolved Oxygen, conductivity and temperature and provide information to statutory authorities when certain environmental thresholds are exceeded or fail to be attained.
- 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 through a drought period.

3.2. Long Term Goals

The WMA will have a structured framework with Natural England, the Environment Agency other Risk Management Authorities and other strategic partners, to:

- Plan for future Drought conditions.
- Invest in adaptive and resilient IDB infrastructure.
- Critically assess the impacts of continuing routine maintenance under drought conditions.
- Seek opportunities to create adaptive and resilient catchment systems with others.

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 lessons learnt across the sector.