

Michael F. Easley
Governor



State of North Carolina
Office of the Governor

For Release: **IMMEDIATE**
Date: October 15, 2007

Contact: Seth Effron
Phone: 919/733-5612

**GOV. EASLEY CALLS ON CITY OFFICIALS TO LEAD IN HELPING CITIZENS
STOP NON-ESSENTIAL WATER USE**

Governor Tells League Of Municipalities Some Systems Could Run Dry In 90 Days Without Rain

RALEIGH – Gov. Mike Easley today called on the state’s municipal leaders to take the lead in directing citizens to stop using water for any purpose that is not essential to public health and safety so communities can save their dwindling water supplies and avoid more stringent restrictions. The drought across much of the state is the worst in recorded history. With a winter forecast of drier than normal conditions, the governor said every citizen must save water in every way possible to avoid a water crisis that could lead to rationing.

“Several communities have as little as three month’s water supply remaining. If we do not get significant rain, some areas face the once unthinkable possibility of water rationing and potentially running out of water entirely,” Easley said. “A bit of mud on the car or patches of brown on the lawn must be a badge of honor. It means you are doing the right thing for your community and our state.”

Easley spoke to the about 1,000 mayors, council members and city managers attending the N.C. League of Municipalities Annual Conference in Fayetteville. He asked the top officials of the state’s cities and towns to lead their communities in taking the following actions:

- Stop watering lawns and shrubbery at homes and businesses. Period.
- Do not wash down houses, driveways or sidewalks.
- Do not wash your car.
- Restaurants should **ONLY** serve water when patrons ask.

The governor also announced that, effective immediately, there is a statewide ban on all public burning. The N.C. Division of Forest Resources says more than 5,940 fires have already burned more than 33,085 acres in North Carolina this year. Because the state is in the fall fire season, with especially dry conditions throughout the state, the threat of wildfires has substantially increased.

The governor’s staff, state environment officials and members of the League of Municipalities have been meeting to coordinate on strategies for dealing with the drought. The governor praised local officials for the cooperative way that many communities have responded to his requests for voluntary and mandatory water conservation as the drought worsened. Several communities’ conservation measures have already resulted in reduced water consumption.

Governor's Press Office
State Capitol, Raleigh, NC 27603-8001
(919) 733-5612 - Toll Free 1-800-662-7005
FAX (919) 733-5166

Easley said, but that the entire state must work together to try to lessen the drought's impact. The governor has asked Secretary of Administration Britt Cobb and Secretary of Environment and Natural Resources Bill Ross to personally monitor state agencies' compliance with the water conservation directive he issued earlier this summer. He said residents should continue to do simple things like turning off the faucet while brushing teeth or shaving, but that the seriousness of the drought means that cities and towns can no longer consider just the water needs of their own populations.

"State law gives me emergency powers to take action, even ordering rationing, if there is a threat to life and property," Easley told the local leaders. "Now, I do not want to have to use these powers. As leaders of your communities, you know what works best at the local level. I am asking for your help. Your communities, businesses and neighbors need you to help make the tough choices today to avoid a crisis in the weeks or months to come."

The federal drought map released last week showed 56 counties in the mountains and Piedmont are experiencing exceptional drought, the worst level. The remaining 44 counties are experiencing extreme, severe or moderate drought. The drought map can be found at www.ncdrought.org.

The governor's request for communities to conserve water has been well-received throughout the state. Currently, 118 public water systems have enacted voluntary water use restrictions and another 106 systems have put mandatory restrictions in place. About 4.81 million people, or 71 percent of the people served by water systems the state tracks, are subject to water use restrictions.

For a list of water conservation tips, go to <http://p2pays.org/water/TopTen.asp>. Residents can check the status of their own community's water conservation measures at http://www.ncwater.org/Drought_Monitoring/reporting/displaystate.php.

###