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England Faces Entrenched Drought as Dry Weather Persists

Reservoirs remain below average, hosepipe bans stay in place and farmers confront rising strain from low water supplies

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England remained under prolonged dry conditions in the week ending July 23, with moderate drought still affecting much of southern and central parts of the country, according to a government update released Friday.

The report said rainfall during the week was below average across southern and central England, while parts of the north and east were closer to normal levels. Even where rain fell, it brought little relief to longer-term shortages. River flows dropped further, groundwater stayed low and soil moisture deficits, though slightly reduced by recent

showers, remained significant.

The driest conditions continue in parts of the South West and the East Midlands, the government said. Across those areas and other parts of southern and central England, no meaningful improvement in drought conditions was recorded.

Public water supplies are under continued pressure as reservoir stocks remain below average. Water companies in several regions are keeping drought measures in place, including hosepipe bans and limits on non-essential water use. In some affected areas, companies are also relying on drought permits as they try to protect essential supplies.

The government said operational planning remains focused on maintaining water for core household and public needs. Officials are also urging conservation across sectors as dry weather continues.

Agriculture is already showing signs of strain. Dry soils are affecting crop growth and pasture quality, while farmers are reporting higher irrigation demand. In some regions, that demand is colliding with restrictions on water use, leaving growers exposed if the dry spell continues into another hot week.

That matters beyond farming alone. Lower yields for grains and other crops can ripple through supply chains tied to beer, spirits and food production, while continued pressure on water availability can raise risks for beverage makers that depend on stable supplies for processing and cleaning. For vineyards and fruit growers linked to wine, cider and soft drinks, prolonged heat and limited water can also affect fruit development and harvest timing.

Low water levels are also disrupting navigation on some rivers used for commercial and recreational traffic. The government said several navigable waterways are facing operational challenges because of reduced flows.

Environmental agencies are monitoring ecological stress in rivers and other water bodies as low flows combine with high water temperatures. Those conditions can reduce oxygen levels and put pressure on fish and other aquatic life. Conservation work is continuing in affected areas.

The outlook offers little immediate comfort. The forecast cited in the report points to another week of mostly dry and warm weather across much of England, with only isolated showers expected. Temperatures are forecast to stay above average, a pattern likely to increase evaporation and deepen pressure on soils, rivers and reservoirs.

The latest assessment suggests that England’s drought picture is becoming more entrenched rather than easing. While rainfall has been uneven from region to region, officials said it has not been enough to reverse the broader pattern of depleted water resources that has built up over time.