2016/2017 GA EPD DROUGHT RESPONSE UPDATE
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During the summer of 2016 portions of the southeast were included in the cluster of cities that saw the warmest July on record. Not only was July a historical month in regards to temperatures, it was also the driest month on record for some locations. Due to the persistent and extremely dry conditions in the State of Georgia, and after continuous monitoring of climatic indicators and water supply conditions, the Georgia EPD implemented drought response strategies under the State's Drought Management Rule adopted in 2015 for many counties throughout the state. Subsequently, EPD made two drought response level declarations. The first declaration was made on September 9th for a Drought Response Level 1 in 53 counties in northwest Georgia. Faced with worsening drought conditions in about three-fourths of the state, along with water supply concerns in some areas, EPD made a second drought declaration on November 17th, raising the drought response to Level 2 in 52 counties including Atlanta metro area and much of North Georgia, while imposing a Level 1 Drought Response in an additional 58 counties in the northeastern part of the State and central Georgia (110 of 159 counties). According to the drought rule, there are three levels of drought responses (levels 1, 2 and 3) that can be declared by the EPD Director. Drought response level 1, a first stage early warning, requires increased education on drought and voluntary conservation. Levels 2 and 3 contain mandatory measures that are designed to reduce water demands. Public water systems who want to impose outdoor water use restrictions more or less stringent than the state requirements must request and be granted a variance from the state's current drought response.

Program reference: 1.1.5