Our plan for this summer's acute water shortage

Updated: Jan 24th 2024

Available water supply buffer

Our region's drinking water supply system has a finite capacity. We can only treat and supply a certain amount of safe drinking water on any given day. This includes a "buffer" that allows for varying levels in daily water usage, unplanned outages, or planned maintenance work. The increase in leaks in the network means the available 'buffer' is becoming increasingly tight, particularly over the summer when supply is lower. The percentages in the grey boxes below indicate the buffer available at each level of water restrictions. As the buffer reduces, the risk of not having enough safe water for our communities increases. The risk of the water not being safe also increases due to the pressure in the network getting too low, allowing contaminants to enter the system. This would pose a risk to public health and result in boil water notices.

20%** available buffer

WATER RESTRICTIONS LEVEL 2

ACTIONS NEEDED FROM THE PUBLIC

- No irrigation or sprinklers
- Water your garden by hand only at any time so long as it's not unattended

ACTIONS WELLINGTON WATER & COUNCILS WILL TAKE

- Proactively engage with and remind residents to use less water
- Monitor supply and manage the network as efficiently as possible
- Continue to find and fix as many leaks within current funding
- Warn regulators & essential services of the risk of a Level 4 Water Restriction - Drinking Water Emergency

10%** available buffer

WATER RESTRICTIONS LEVEL 3

ACTIONS NEEDED FROM THE PUBLIC

- Stop all outdoor water use.
- Consider using less water indoors
- Business can continue as normal but encouraged to be pragmatic and responsible

ACTIONS WELLINGTON WATER & COUNCILS WILL TAKE

- Increase communications and engagement to ask public to use less water
- Liaise with councils re enforcement activities
- Monitor supply and manage the network as efficiently as possible
- Continue to find and fix as many leaks within current funding
- Liaise with regulators & emergency management agencies to start preparing for the risk of a Level 4 Water Restriction
- Prepare Taumata Arowai to declare a Drinking Water Emergency

5%** available buffer

WATER RESTRICTIONS LEVEL 4

ACTIONS NEEDED FROM THE PUBLIC

- Significantly reduce indoor water use - by up to 50% - to ensure there is enough water for everyone
- Stop all outdoor water use.
- Business to also significantly reduce water use

ACTIONS WELLINGTON WATER & COUNCILS WILL TAKE

- Stand up a Wellington Water emergency management team
- Significantly ramp up communications and engagement with the public to ask everyone to significantly use less water
- Continue to find and fix as many leaks within current funding
- Request that Taumata Arowai declare a Drinking Water Emergency
- Begin to take additional water from source as authorised by regulator to maintain a 5% water supply buffer

0%** available buffer

REGIONAL STATE OF EMERGENCY

ACTIONS NEEDED FROM THE PUBLIC

- Be aware that some areas or suburbs may be out of water
- If water is still on in your local area continue to significantly reduce use
- Check on your neighbours, friends and whanau
- Follow updates and instructions from your local authorities

ACTIONS WELLINGTON WATER & COUNCILS WILL TAKE

- Request WREMO to facilitate the signing of a regional state of emergency for local councils
- Daily media stand ups and public updates
- Continue to take authorised additional water from sources
- Support councils to respond to the regional state of emergency
- Continue to find and fix as many leaks within current funding

This could occur if a critical asset failed while in level 4

About this plan

This plan has been developed based on the principles of safe drinking water and Te Mana o te Wai.

Our initial objective was to avoid the full impacts of level 4 through agile management of the region's water network and to move the water quickly to where it is needed. This was not feasible given the poor condition of network.

Next we looked at taking a more cautious approach to achieve a soft landing of level 4 in pre-chosen areas well away from critical customers. This option would've only required taking a small amount of additional water from our sources. Again this was not feasible given the condition of the network.

Our final approach (this plan) ensures the region can maintain the provision of safe drinking water in the event of Level 4 but the public need to significantly reduce their water use. To achieve this, we have to rely on additional water from our sources which will be above our consent conditions, as reflected in the Level 4 actions in this plan.

This modelling is reviewed each month and updated as necessary.
*The efforts of the public following water restrictions can reduce this chance, but this requires everyone to do their bit.
**The buffer is one key indicator of risk, and is offered as a guide only. Other factors are monitored as part of level risk assessment.