



Understanding West Bridgewater's Water Withdrawal Permit and Water Bans

Our Water Permit

The Water Department is required to run under the Rules and Regulations of the Federal Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection (MassDEP). The EPA provides the basic Rules and Regulations, and then MassDEP can have additional and stricter rules and regulations that we must follow.

The Town of West Bridgewater draws its water from underground wells in the Taunton River Basin. We are required to hold a Water Withdrawal Permit, issued by MassDEP, in order to withdraw water from the ground and provide it to our residents.

Permits are issued based on the Safe Yield of the Taunton River Basin, which is what we withdraw from. On May 31, 1991, the West Bridgewater Water Department was issued its first permit that allowed us to withdraw a daily average of 1.53 Million Gallons per Day (MGD). The MassDEP considers our usage trends to determine how much water they will allow us to withdraw and has since lowered our registered withdrawal permit volume. Our current permit was issued on March 18, 2021, expires February 28, 2030, and currently allows us to withdraw a maximum daily average of 0.87 MGD, provided that West Bridgewater is meeting all the Special Permit Conditions.



Special Permit Conditions

Performance Standards

Massachusetts sets a standard for the average number of gallons used per resident per day over the year and a limit for unaccounted for water in our system.

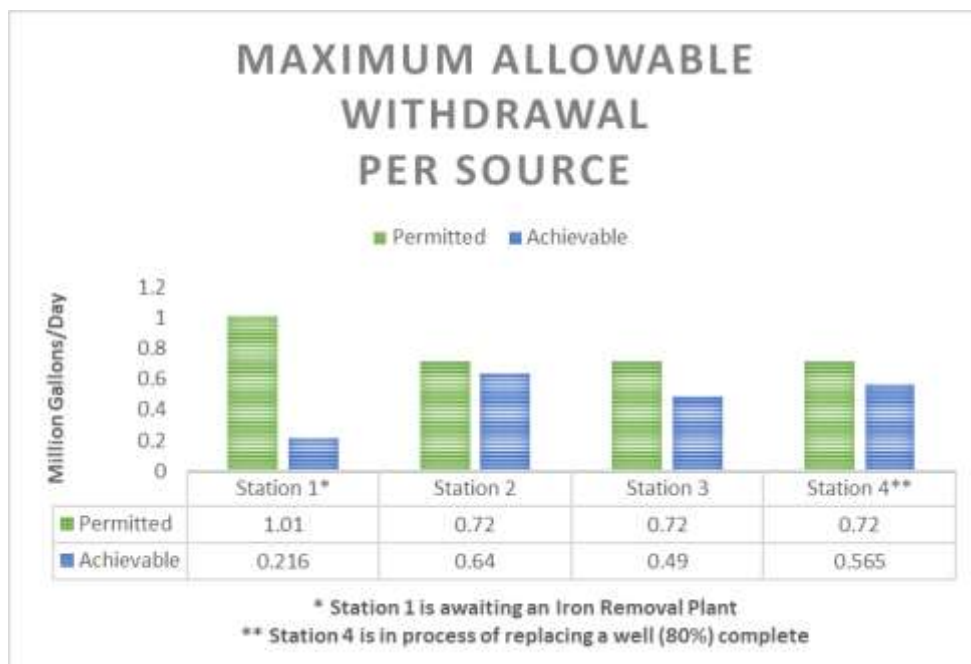
In our 2021 Annual Report to MassDEP we showed our residential gallons per capita day at 50, which is under the state’s 65-gallon limit. We also showed only 8.9% unaccounted for water, again under the state-imposed 10% limit.

We have not always met the performance standards due to aging water mains in several locations and the fact that leaks do not always send water to the surface and cannot be found. A lack of manpower and funding further hinders the ability to always meet this performance standard.



Withdrawal Limits (by location)

MassDEP also sets how much can be withdrawn from any one source. The amount we can actually produce with our current stations is shown below. We can only safely run two stations at one time without producing “dirty” water. When we exceed the capacity of any one of these stations due to increased water demands (for example, sprinkler season), another station must be engaged to provide water to residents. Having more than two stations running at a time changes the speed (velocity) of the water flowing in the pipes which causes the water to scour the pipes and bring up sediment, making the water “dirty.”



Withdrawal Limits (Overall)

The Water Withdrawal Permit issued by the MassDEP allows us to draw an average of 0.87 MGD for the year. A higher level of withdrawal is anticipated during summer months, but the yearly average must remain under the 0.87 MGD level.

During the summer of 2022, we have been running between 0.90 MGD and 1.1 MGD, which exceeds the limit and puts us at risk of being over our yearly average.

Seasonal Limits

The Water Department must certify each year that we will abide by the Seasonal Limits on [Nonessential Outdoor Water Use](#), and actively enforce these limitations.

Calendar Triggered Restrictions:



West Bridgewater will abide by Seasonal Limits on [nonessential outdoor water use](#) so that such uses (i.e. lawn sprinklers, etc.) are allowed *only* during certain time periods on two (2) days per week from May 1 to September 30. These two days will be set by the Board of Water Commissioners and posted by April 15 each year.

Stream Flow Trigger Restrictions:

The United States Geological Survey (USGS) monitors the amount of water in particular streams in each watershed basin to gauge the availability of water. When levels are below the required minimum for three (3) consecutive days, another limitation is placed on the Water Permit holder.



Under the Stream Flow Trigger, [nonessential outdoor water use](#) (i.e. lawn sprinklers, etc.) is reduced to be allowed *on only one (1) day per week*. West Bridgewater has set this to be from 5:00 pm on Thursday to 9:00 am on Friday. Any nonessential outdoor water use outside of that designated period will be a violation and [will incur fines](#) as outlined in West Bridgewater's By-Laws, Article 42, Section 7.