## Introduction

To assure a continuous supply of water to its customers during periods of extreme drought, the Holyoke Water Works has prepared a draft Water Use Restriction Ordinance. A drought is defined as an extended period of below average rainfall at levels harmful to the safe supply of potable water. A copy of the draft ordinance is located in Appendix A. If enacted, the ordinance will enable the City, acting through its Board of Water Commissioners, to control and mitigate periods of high demands and the associated stresses on the water supply during droughts by declaring a State of Water Supply Conservation.

The restrictions in the ordinance include odd/even day outdoor watering, limited outdoor watering hours, outdoor watering bans, and prohibitions on filling swimming pools and the use of automatic sprinkler systems. If the Board of Water Commissioners declares a State of Water Supply Conservation, it may elect to include any or all of the restrictions listed above. The ordinance also establishes notification requirements to the public and to the MADEP. Persons violating the water use restrictions of the ordinance are subject to fines. Termination of the State of Water Supply Conservation must be by majority vote of the Board of Water Commissioners and is subject to the same notification requirements as a Declaration of State of Water Supply Conservation.

If, after declaration of a State of Water Supply Conservation, the Holyoke Water Works continues to experience difficulties in providing an adequate supply of water reliably and consistently, the Holyoke Water Works can petition the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection to declare a State of Water Supply Emergency under M.G.L. c. 21G, §15-17. In declaring such a state, MADEP must find that “there exists or impends a water supply shortage of a dimension which endangers the public health, safety, or welfare”. Declaration of a Water Supply Emergency would improve HWW’s chances for funding opportunities to combat a water supply shortage. A State of Emergency may not last longer than six months. Copies of the applicable M.G.L. sections are included in Appendix B.

Under a State of Water Supply Emergency, the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection would have significant authority to combat the water supply shortage. MADEP may require HWW to submit a plan, to be approved by MADEP, to address and resolve the water supply emergency. The plan may include provisions for shutting off water on public or private property. MADEP may further require any or all of the following:

* Approved water resources management plan
* Leak detection program
* Program for auditing water use
* Overall system rehabilitation program
* Conservation programs
* Bans or restrictions on certain water uses
* Moratorium on issuance of new building permits
* Plan for establishing priority for distribution of water among competing uses
* Drought management and/or emergency contingency plan

Development of an emergency response plan and passage of a water use restriction ordinance are two positive measures toward drought preparedness. More detailed guidance for development of a drought management plan is available from the American Water Works Association and the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection.