



The Metropolitan District  
water supply • environmental services • geographic information

## MDC MAY TEMPORARILY SUSPEND RELEASES FROM GOODWIN DAM

*Dry weather requires effort to preserve adequate fish habitat and recreation within the West Branch Reservoir*

For Immediate Release  
October 18, 2016

**(HARTFORD, CT)** Much of Connecticut and Massachusetts, including the Farmington River watershed, is currently experiencing a period of extended drought. The watershed of the West Branch of the Farmington River has experienced extremely dry conditions, with little beneficial precipitation for most of 2016, a condition that began in 2015 and continues now into the current fall. The West Branch is also seeing more severe drought conditions than most of Connecticut, with precipitation amounts more than 75% below normal, and a rainfall deficit for the year of 12-14 inches.

The Metropolitan District (MDC) owns and operates Goodwin Dam, located on the West Branch of the Farmington River in Hartland, CT. Goodwin Dam was constructed by the MDC in 1960, creating the 2.9 billion gallon West Branch Reservoir. This reservoir, which is open to the public for boating and fishing, is located immediately downstream of Colebrook River Lake. The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers built the Colebrook River Dam in 1969, which controls more than 30 billion gallons of capacity in Colebrook River Lake for flood control and other purposes. The MDC owns 13 billion gallons of water in Colebrook River Lake, and the State of Connecticut, DEEP fisheries owns 3.3 billion gallons of the lake's capacity. The MDC facilitates the release of DEEP's fisheries water through Goodwin Dam as directed by DEEP to further augment the low natural inflows to the river.

The West Branch Reservoir and Colebrook River Lake are not currently used as part of the MDC's drinking water supply, but are used to manage riparian flow releases, to release minimum stream flows to maintain the West Branch of the Farmington River, and to enhance recreation on the reservoirs and in the river. The multi-purpose nature of these impoundments and the benefits that they provide to the river as a whole, are major reasons why this portion of the River downstream of Goodwin Dam has been designated as Wild and Scenic.

As dictated by MDC Charter, the MDC is required to maintain a minimum flow release of 50 cubic feet per second (cfs), into the West Branch of the Farmington River through Goodwin Dam. This represents a flow of approximately 32.3 million gallons per day of water into the river downstream of the dam, independent of whether it rains or whether there are minimal or no natural inflows from upstream of Colebrook River Lake.

In mid-June 2016, natural river inflows into the West Branch upstream of Goodwin Dam began to consistently drop well below 50 cfs. The MDC has continued to release the 50 cfs minimum flow from Goodwin Dam through an extremely dry period with minimal natural stream inflows. Because the amount of water that must be released (50 cfs) is much larger than the amount of water that is flowing in naturally, MDC has depleted most of its storage capacity from Colebrook River Lake. The extended drought period has resulted in the MDC meeting its minimum stream flow requirements by utilizing the West Branch Reservoir capacity, drawing down at the rate of 30 to 33 million gallons per day. This rate of depletion is unsustainable, and will exhaust MDC's 2.9 billion gallon West Branch Reservoir capacity by mid-November without relief from much needed precipitation.

The MDC met with various stakeholders on October 12, 2016 to discuss the drought conditions on the West Branch and the facts the reservoir capacity will eventually be depleted with potential impacts on the river and reservoir, adversely affecting recreation on both.

The MDC, after communications and consensus with its stakeholders, and having no other options, intends to hold a sufficient minimum volume of water in West Branch Reservoir. This action will at least preserve and maintain adequate habitat for fish and wildlife living in or on the reservoir during these fall and winter months. It is essential to support a reasonable level of recreation on the reservoir, and to protect the remaining capacity against further drought conditions and the ability to continue releases to the river in the spring.

MDC will continue to work with CT DEEP to optimize the releases of water so as to minimize the effects on aquatic resources within the reservoirs and within the river below. CT DEEP has indicated they will continue to release water from their fisheries pools in Colebrook Reservoir as needed, and the MDC intends to continue the 50 cfs release until the West Branch Reservoir is drawn down to approximately elevation 590 ft. By collectively utilizing the remaining MDC water, the releases from Otis Reservoir and water from the DEEP Fisheries pools, our last resort will be to deviate from the 50 cfs release requirement through the fall and winter period. If and when the West Branch Reservoir reaches this minimum level, it will be necessary to temporarily suspend the 50 cfs releases from Goodwin Dam until such time as additional inflows become available.

The MDC currently projects that it will temporarily suspend the 50cfs releases in mid to late November 2016, assuming that there is no further beneficial precipitation in the interim.

**About the MDC:** *The MDC is a nonprofit municipal corporation chartered by the Connecticut General Assembly in 1929. The MDC provides water, sewer and household hazardous waste collection services to its member municipalities: Bloomfield, East Hartford, Hartford, Newington, Rocky Hill, West Hartford, Wethersfield and Windsor. In addition, the District supplies treated water to portions of Glastonbury, South Windsor, Farmington, East Granby and Portland.*

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