

Taps running dry

Spokeswoman with watershed that oversees Charlottetown's only source of water says city needs to stop taking so much water

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Sections of Charlottetown's only source of water are beginning to dry up, says the co-ordinator of the Winter River-Tracadie Bay Watershed Association. Sarah Wheatley said Monday the City of Charlottetown needs to draw less water than it has been.

"They're drying out earlier than they usually do . . . the springs are slowing to a trickle and getting shallower," Wheatley said.

"There is almost zero flow there."

The city does have in place mandatory water restrictions, allowing for outdoor watering only in the early morning and evening hours. The hosing of driveways and other hard surfaces is prohibited.

The watershed is most vulnerable to water extraction during the summer months and the city indicated in a news release on Friday that all residents must follow the restrictions to ease the strain.

Wheatley said it's not enough.

"We keep pushing them to

"They're drying out earlier than they usually do . . . the springs are slowing to a trickle and getting shallower. There is almost zero flow there." Sarah Wheatley put in more strict summertime usage rules where you are not allowed to water your lawn or fill up your swimming pool."

She said cities like Vancouver and Victoria in British Columbia and Guelph, Ont., use recent weather conditions to govern water restrictions.

There are different categories, based on the reservoir or river levels.

Coun. Eddie Rice, chairman of the city's water and sewer committee, said the city is doing everything it can possibly do.

Rice said the city is awaiting federal money to finish off the new well field project, which will ease the strain on the watershed. It is also in the midst of attaching water meters to all customers.

"We're still only extracting what we're allowed, and that is going to change when we get the new well field open and we're working towards that," Rice said, adding that the hope is to have the new well field online by November, if the funding comes through in time.

“We’ve cut back on consumption, we’ve cut back on a number of things. Even our cruise ships, while the number of ships (coming into port) increases, the amount of water (they) take has decreased. We can do nothing more than we’re doing.”

Wheatley said the new well field will help spread the burden but argues the city is still taking more than it should.

She said last year’s record snowfall fully recharged the watershed, but the lack of snow this past winter is now being felt.

Rice reiterated federal money is necessary before they can finish things off and get it open.

“We’re working with the feds, with the province; we’ve met our mandates. I can’t make (the money) come any faster. We have all our applications in.”