



STAFF REPORT

To: Honorable Mayor and Members of Town Council

Through: David L. Corliss, Town Manager

From: Mark Marlowe, P.E., Director of Castle Rock Water
Mark Henderson, Assistant Director of Castle Rock Water
Lauren Moore, Water Resources Manager
Rick Schultz, Water Efficiency Supervisor

Title: **Resolution Declaring an Advisory Drought Stage (Stage 1) in the Castle Rock Water Service Area** [*Town of Castle Rock and extraterritorial service areas*]

Executive Summary

The purpose of this memorandum is to request Town Council approval of a Resolution (**Attachment A**) declaring an **Advisory Drought Stage (Stage 1)** in the Castle Rock Water service area. Current and projected water supply conditions, including historical below-average snowpack, elevated temperatures, and increased water demand, indicate a heightened risk to the Town's near-term renewable water supply reliability. While current system storage levels remain stable and the Water Supply Index (WSI) is above drought trigger thresholds, emerging regional and statewide drought indicators demonstrate a need for proactive action to preserve water resources, support regional water providers, and potentially avoid more severe restrictions later this summer. Pursuant to Castle Rock Municipal Code Chapter 13.15, the Director of Castle Rock Water, as Program Administrator, is authorized to declare and implement drought stages based on the Water Supply Index (WSI) and existing water supply conditions. In accordance with Castle Rock Municipal Code Chapter 13.12, once a drought stage is declared, public notice must be provided and becomes enforceable within 24 to 48 hours, at which point all water users are required to comply with the applicable restrictions, and violations may result in enforcement actions as outlined in the Water Use Management Plan (WUMP) and Drought Management Plan (DMP)

Declaring Stage 1 drought will reinforce existing conservation practices, increase public awareness and early behavioral changes, and position the Town to respond more effectively if conditions worsen. This early declaration is intended to reduce demand, protect stored supplies, and maintain operational flexibility in advance of peak summer water use. Under the Town's DMP, **Stage 1 consists of voluntary conservation and early demand reduction, with a target of approximately 10% water savings.**

Notification and Outreach Efforts

Notification and outreach efforts include regional coordination and collaboration with neighboring communities and water providers including Highlands Ranch Water and Parker Water and Sanitation District to monitor and communicate drought conditions including a joint press release on March 24th. That news release urged residents to conserve as irrigation season approaches and given the warm, dry winter and below-average snowpack across Colorado to remind customers to use water wisely and avoid unnecessary waste.

Upon approval of the drought resolution, Castle Rock Water will provide formal notice of the declared drought stage in accordance with Castle Rock Municipal Code Chapter 13.12, which requires that notice be delivered to customers and/or published on the Town's website. Such notice becomes legally effective within 24 hours of those notices delivered to the customer or 48 hours after publication of the notice, whichever occurs sooner. At that point all water users are required to comply with the applicable drought restrictions.

Castle Rock Water plans to conduct the following outreach in response to the drought declaration:

- Provide public notice by publishing the drought declaration on the Town website
- Conduct outreach to the public via Town websites, email newsletter, social media, electronic signage and press releases.
- Provide guidance on voluntary conservation measures
- Continue customer education through existing outreach programs
- Coordinate messaging with regional partners as appropriate

History of Past Town Council, Boards & Commissions, or Other Discussions

Castle Rock Water Staff have presented frequent drought updates to the Castle Rock Water Commission at meetings in January through April of 2026.

On April 17, 2018, Town Council approved Resolution 2018-041 adopting the 2018 Drought Management Plan.

On May 1, 2018, Town Council approved by second reading Ordinance 2018-011 Amending Section 13.12.070 of the Castle Rock Municipal Code Concerning Emergency Regulation of Water.

On February 4, 2025, Town Council approved Resolution 2025-007 for the updated 2025 Drought Management Plan.

Castle Rock Water staff presented it to the Economic Development Council (EDC) Water Subcommittee on April 17, 2026, summarizing the drought stages and restrictions according to the Drought Management Plan and potential implications to new development.

Castle Rock Water staff presented this item to the Castle Rock Water Commission at their meeting held on April 22, 2026, and the Castle Rock Water Commission voted unanimously 7 to 0 to recommend Town Council approval of the Resolution as presented.

ADD all the dates where we presented an update to Council on the status of the drought and the likelihood for drought restrictions.

Discussion

Current data indicates that drought conditions persist both regionally and statewide. According to the U.S. Drought Monitor, Douglas County is currently 100% in abnormally dry conditions, with approximately 85% in moderate drought and 25% in severe drought. The Town's 10-day WSI is 3.8 (as of May 4, 2026), indicating sufficient supply at present; however, this metric does not account for anticipated seasonal increases in demand or the potential for reduced imported supplies, such as Water Infrastructure Supply Efficiency (WISE) project deliveries.

Snowpack conditions across Colorado remain historically low, increasing concern for reduced runoff and future water supply constraints. While local storage conditions are currently stable, long-term renewable supplies remain highly dependent on future runoff conditions.

On March 17, 2026, Governor Jared Polis activated Colorado's Drought Task Force and initiated Phase 2 of the State Drought Response Plan in response to worsening statewide conditions. The Governor's action was based on several key indicators, including one of the warmest and driest starts to a water year on record, snowpack levels among the lowest in more than four decades, and roughly one-third of the state experiencing severe drought or worse. This activation underscores growing concerns about water supply reliability and the need for coordinated, proactive response efforts across jurisdictions

Additionally, other Front Range communities have already implemented or are planning drought restrictions. The City of Aurora and Denver Water have issued drought declarations and are implementing water restrictions. As a participant in the regional WISE project, Castle Rock is directly connected to these providers. The Town currently owns 2,250 acre-feet (AF) of WISE shares, including associated delivery infrastructure, and receives water supplied through Aurora's sources and treatment facilities. In some years, WISE has delivered up to 1,242 AF to the Town. Because WISE is a shared regional system, implementing drought restrictions in Castle Rock helps support system reliability and aligns with conservation efforts across partner providers.

Availability of Castle Rock Water's WISE supply, which is interruptible 2 out of every 10 years for drought, is in question this year given the scale and impact of the drought on Aurora Water and Denver Water.

Advisory Drought Stage (Stage 1) Measures:

Under the Town's Drought Management Plan, an Advisory Drought Stage (Stage 1) includes voluntary conservation and early demand reduction, with a target of approximately 10% water savings.

Key measures include:

- **Outdoor Water Use**
 - Continued enforcement of existing watering schedules and time-of-day restrictions
 - Emphasis on limiting watering days and duration
 - Encouragement of efficient irrigation practices and reduction of non-essential outdoor water use
- **Indoor and Commercial Use**
 - Voluntary conservation; no mandatory indoor restrictions at this stage
 - Encouragement of water-saving behaviors and efficiency improvements
- **General Conservation Practices**
 - Promote reduction of water waste (e.g., runoff, overwatering, leaks)
 - Encourage use of low-water landscaping and irrigation technologies
 - Encourage reduced frequency of water-intensive activities (e.g., vehicle washing, decorative water use)
- **Commercial and Institutional Measures**
 - Encourage conservation practices such as reduced linen washing in lodging establishments and general water efficiency measures

Advisory Drought Stage (Stage 1) actions are intended to increase awareness, achieve some demand reductions without significant impacts to customers, while preparing the community for potential escalation if conditions worsen. This approach aligns with the Town’s Drought Management Plan, which emphasizes early action to prevent supply depletion, phased implementation of conservation measures, and potential avoidance of more severe restrictions later in the season.

Budget Impact

The implementation of Advisory Drought Stage (Stage 1) measures is expected to have minimal direct budget impact, as conservation efforts are voluntary and outreach and enforcement will be managed within existing operational resources. At this stage, no drought-specific rate adjustments are triggered under the current structure. However, Castle Rock Water has evaluated potential impacts of higher drought stages, where conservation would be driven in part by rate structure modifications, including reduced outdoor water budgets and adjusted surcharge thresholds. These future measures could influence both water demand and revenues but are not anticipated under Stage 1 conditions.

Staff Recommendation

Staff recommends approval of the Resolution declaring an Advisory Drought Stage (Stage 1) to promote early conservation, protect water supplies, and position the Town for effective response should conditions worsen.

Proposed Motion

“I move to approve the Resolution as introduced by title.”

Alternative Motions

"I move to approve the Resolution as introduced by title, with the following conditions: (list conditions)."

"I move to continue this item to the Town Council meeting on _____ date to allow additional time to (list information needed)."

Attachments

Attachment A: Resolution