

# Scottish rivers could face three times as many droughts

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Some of Scotland's rivers could become hotspots for water scarcity, according to a new study from Heriot-Watt University and the Scottish Environment Protection Agency (SEPA).

Researchers used flow projections from across Scotland to model which regions and industries could be affected by droughts between 2020 and 2049

Professor Lindsay Beevers from Heriot-Watt University said: "We wanted to identify existing and emerging [drought](#) hotspots in Scotland, where more frequent, longer droughts are likely.

"Our analysis shows that droughts could become two to three times more frequent across much of Scotland."

The researchers looked at the [impact of climate change](#) on abstractions, the water that industry is licensed to remove from Scotland's surface water such as rivers and lochs.

Beevers said: "Abstraction is vital for our economy. Knowing which areas could face [water scarcity](#) means we can plan and adapt to protect our economy and the environment.

"We can learn a lot from the south of England, where they've come up with some really interesting ways to balance supply, demand and storage."

Tiffany Lau from SEPA said: "SEPA is clear that by taking the right steps now, we can reduce the impact of water scarcity in the future. By working with the [water sector](#) we can ensure the reliable supply of Scotland's high quality water resource is maintained. Increasingly Scottish businesses are aware of the need to plan for the future by adopting and developing their own water saving innovations and SEPA will help them do this."

"We all rely on water, a finite but essential resource, and SEPA is now consulting on the set of water management actions we believe will help

us deliver a more sustainable and resilient use of water for the future."

Beevers concluded: "We think of Scotland as having an abundant, endless [water](#) supply, but we need to start planning better for scarcities. Especially when it comes to the rivers that supply some of our biggest industries."

The study was published in *Climate Risk Management*.

**More information:** Annie Visser-Quinn et al, Mapping future water scarcity in a water abundant nation: Near-term projections for Scotland, *Climate Risk Management* (2021). [DOI: 10.1016/j.crm.2021.100302](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.crm.2021.100302)

Provided by Heriot-Watt University

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