

# Island suffers worst water shortage for three decades

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Bermuda is in the grip of the worst water crisis in three decades.

Coffee shops have closed their doors because they do not have enough water to make lattes and cappuccinos.

Some homeowners have not had water in their tanks to take a shower or do the washing-up.

The combination of dry weather and unusually low rainfall is fuelling the problem.

Water truckers warned yesterday that customers face a two-week wait to get their tanks refilled.

## Showers

Government outlined a series of emergency measures this week, hammering home a public awareness message — conserve, conserve, conserve.

Weather forecasters are hopeful showers will bring some respite this weekend.

But after unseasonably dry weather in April and May and the second lowest recorded rainfall in June, businesses are starting to feel the pinch.

Popular Hamilton café Rock Island closed for business on Wednesday, plastering its door with signs apologizing and urging people to conserve water.

Lisabet Outerbridge, the café's owner, told the *Bermuda Sun* staff have been using paper cups because there was not enough water to do the washing up.

She said: "It has been a real struggle for us. It is an education

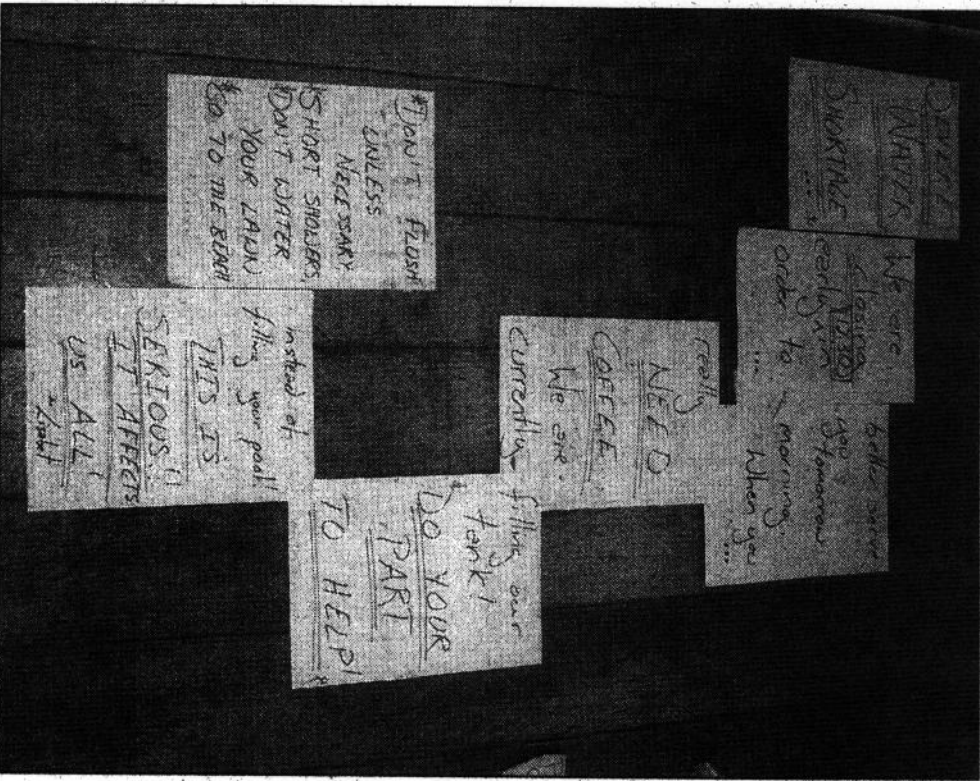


PHOTO BY JAMES WHITTAKER

**SHUTTING UP SHOP:** Posters on the door of Rock Island reveal the coffee house had to close early due to the severe water shortage.

and a reminder to everyone to be more conservative with their water use.

"We have been running since last week on a bare minimum amount of water and doing carafes of coffee at the start of the day.

"On Wednesday we came in and by 9am there was no running

'Even when rain is forecast that doesn't mean it is tank rain... people have to conserve.'

**RUSS FORD**  
*President of the Bermuda Water Truckers' Association.*

water so we had to make a decision. I know other businesses in Hamilton have been affected."

With a long hot summer ahead, industry experts fear things are only going to get worse.

Russ Ford, president of the Bermuda Water Truckers' Association, said: "This is the worst it has ever been."

"Truckers who have been doing the job for 30 years say this is the worst they have known."

"The problem is it started early. We had a long period with no rain even before the summer began."

## Hell

Mr. Ford does not have much hope things will get better in the next three months, despite forecasts for rain this weekend.

"They said it was going to rain today but it is hotter than hell out there. The bottom line is there is no rain coming, people have to conserve."

"Even when rain is forecast that doesn't mean it is tank rain. What little rain we have had has been just enough to wet the grass."

"Mother Nature is being very selfish and it is because of what we have done to her."

"The current water shortage has led to restricted hours at the

truckers' outlets. There have also been limitations imposed for piped customers to allow daily access to water while ensuring customers like the hospital, Cedar Park and Mary Victoria Estates — that are solely reliant on the piped water — receive it. Last week, Derrick Burgess, Minister for Works and Engineering, asked for the public's "patience and understanding". He said: "We are calling upon churches and businesses at this time to assist."

"These facilities generally have larger water tanks and generally use only a small portion of the stored water."

Andrew Hobson, meteorological forecaster at the Bermuda Weather Service, said the 0.79ins of rainfall in June was close to the record low — 0.64ins set in 2005. The difference this time is that April and May were extremely dry as well.

For the year so far, rainfall is down eight inches at 17.96 compared with an average of 26.41 in the first half of the year.

"The rain is out there on the radar but the Bermuda-Azores high pressure system had been blocking it off. We should see that weaken this weekend." ■