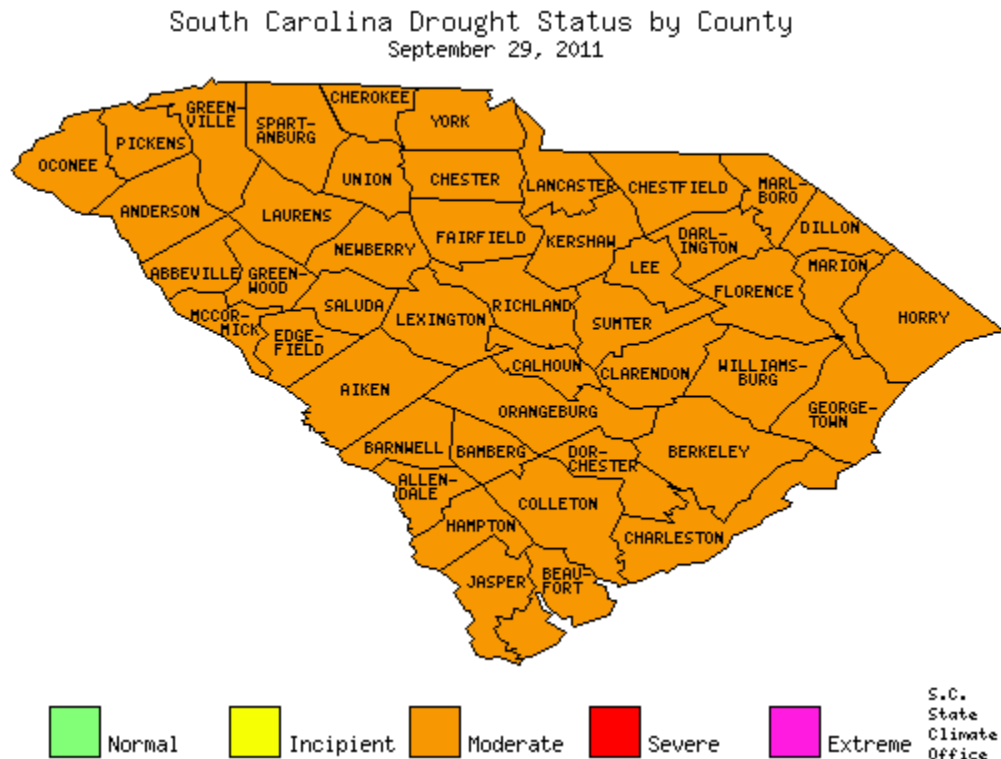


South Carolina Current Drought Status

The South Carolina Drought Response Committee maintains all counties as moderate



Discussion:

Members of the S.C. Drought Response Committee, meeting via tele-conference on Sept. 29, maintained all counties in the state at moderate drought status.

The Committee maintained the moderate drought status due to their concern the rain events last week may have only been a short-term interruption to a pattern of below normal rainfall that is forecast to continue. Most areas of the state received rain Sept. 20-28, but the amounts varied considerably. Some sites such as North Augusta received 1.54" while Columbia Owens Field Airport reported 9.37".

David Tompkins with the S.C. Department of Agriculture reported, "We've had a lot of rain that helped and we're not at a time of year where rainfall is quite so critical with various harvests going on. Our biggest concern is on grasses for livestock grazing as the cold starts to set in."

Doug Mills with the S.C. Forestry Commission stated that while recent rains have caused a welcome reduction in fire occurrence in South Carolina, the dry summer resulted in a long-term moisture deficit, which has produced critically low fuel moisture

levels statewide. Heading into fall every year, fuel load increases as leaves drop from the trees and plants as they go dormant. This coupled with the current drought and fuel conditions means fire occurrence is expected to be high throughout the fall season.

George Galleher, Duke Energy Hydro Fleet Operations engineer, reported the rainfall over the past week was beneficial in helping the lakes gain a small amount of storage. He noted that rainfall will likely keep the Catawba-Wateree River Basin from going into what is defined as a Low Inflow Protocol Stage 2 drought. Prior to the rainfall event, stream flows in the Duke Energy service area were running very low. This included the Catawba-Wateree River, Upper Broad River and the Keowee-Toxaway River Basins. With forecasts for below average precipitation stretching into the winter, he advised that lake storage, particularly in the Keowee-Toxaway Basin, could be expected to gradually decline.

J. Scott Willett, executive director with the Anderson Regional Water System, noted all the recent rain may have only postponed an inevitable drought increase, especially in the Savannah River Basin.

Reports from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers indicated the rain did little to improve lake elevation in the Savannah River Basin. The soaking rain improved upper soil moisture, but reservoirs won't respond significantly until the soil is saturated prior to the rain event. Unfortunately with no rain in the forecast for the next 7 days, lake levels will likely continue to decline.

Hope Mizzell, SC State Climatologist said, "Heavy and extended rainfall this time of year is unusual outside impacts from a passing tropical system. We really dodged a bullet, but it will be critical to monitor indices over next several weeks for a potential deterioration of drought conditions."

The moderate declaration does not require any mandatory action by public water systems or the public, but all water systems should take the opportunity to review their local drought plans and ordinances and where needed implement accordingly. The moderate drought declaration is followed by increasing levels of severity to severe and extreme status.

The Committee has to make decisions based on the overall drought impacts on agriculture, water supply, and forestry in each county. Conditions in some isolated areas may be beyond moderate drought and that some water systems may need to implement more stringent water conservation measures. South Carolina is entering the driest months climatologically, October-November, and without rainfall from tropical systems, rainfall amounts during these months can be very low.

The committee expects to reconvene in approximately three weeks.

Contact South Carolina State Climatologist Dr. Hope Mizzell in Columbia at (803) 734-9568, or (803) 530-5793, or e-mail at mizzellh@dnr.sc.gov for more information.

DNR protects and manages South Carolina's natural resources by making wise and balanced decisions for the benefit of the state's natural resources and its people. Find out more about DNR at [the DNR Web site](#).

Drought Status: 09-29-2011

County	Status
Abbeville	Moderate
Aiken	Moderate
Allendale	Moderate
Anderson	Moderate
Bamberg	Moderate
Barnwell	Moderate
Beaufort	Moderate
Berkeley	Moderate
Calhoun	Moderate
Charleston	Moderate
Cherokee	Moderate
Chester	Moderate
Chesterfield	Moderate
Clarendon	Moderate
Colleton	Moderate
Darlington	Moderate
Dillon	Moderate
Dorchester	Moderate
Edgefield	Moderate
Fairfield	Moderate
Florence	Moderate
Georgetown	Moderate
Greenville	Moderate
Greenwood	Moderate
Hampton	Moderate
Horry	Moderate
Jasper	Moderate
Kershaw	Moderate
Lancaster	Moderate
Laurens	Moderate

County	Status
Lee	Moderate
Lexington	Moderate
Marion	Moderate
Marlboro	Moderate
McCormick	Moderate
Newberry	Moderate
Oconee	Moderate
Orangeburg	Moderate
Pickens	Moderate
Richland	Moderate
Saluda	Moderate
Spartanburg	Moderate
Sumter	Moderate
Union	Moderate
Williamsburg	Moderate
York	Moderate