

South Carolina Current Drought Status

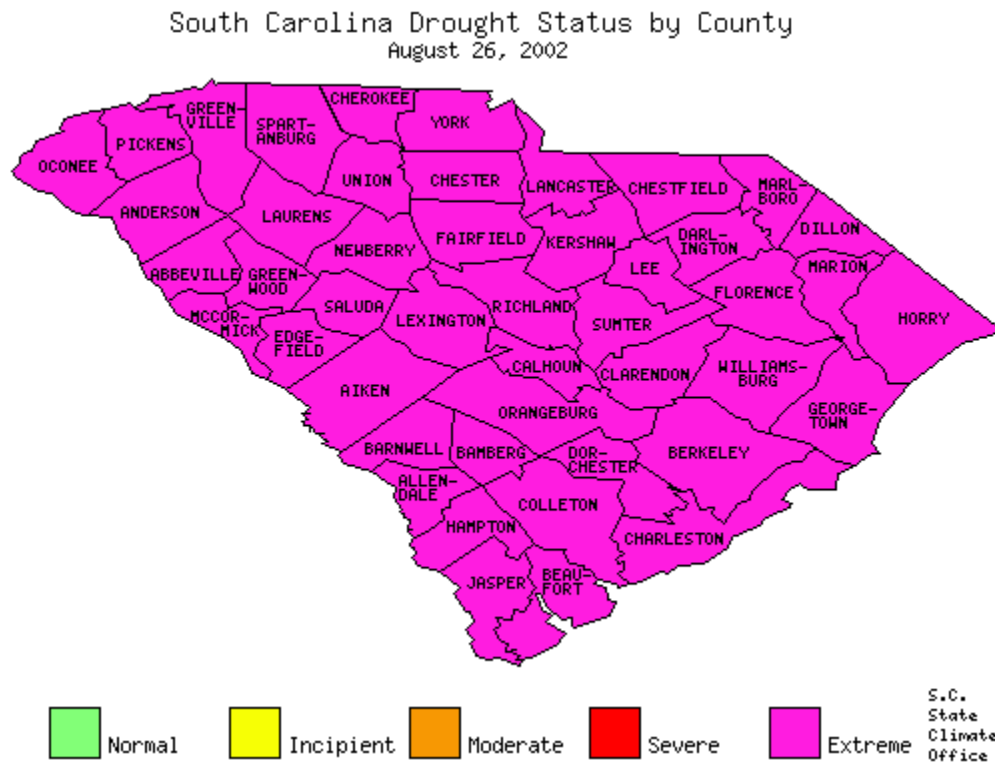
State Climate Office

NEWS RELEASE

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August 26, 2002

'EXTREME' DROUGHT STATUS NOW COVERS ALL 46 COUNTIES



The South Carolina Drought Response Committee has upgraded the final seven counties to "extreme" drought status, meaning that all 46 counties in the state are now included in the most dire drought category.

All of South Carolina, with the exception of seven counties, has been listed in the extreme drought status since July 24. The counties that now join the extreme drought category are Bamberg, Berkeley, Beaufort, Charleston, Colleton, Dorchester and Orangeburg. The Southern Drought Response Committee voted Aug. 20 in Columbia to upgrade the seven counties to extreme status given the agriculture and forestry conditions. The Southern Drought Response Committee motion stated, "Conservation efforts by local water suppliers will be determined by them contingent upon water supply availability."

The Drought Response Committee has not yet recommended statewide or regional mandatory water restrictions. However, local officials may call for mandatory or voluntary restrictions as part of their local response.

The S.C. Department of Natural Resources (DNR), which convenes the Drought Response Committee, conducted a survey of the largest 350 water systems in the state to determine the conservation measures in place and the success of these measures. According to Hope Mizzell, DNR statewide drought coordinator, 29 water systems are asking for mandatory restrictions, with most of these systems reporting an 11-20 percent water-use reduction. Of the water systems surveyed, 104 are asking for voluntary reductions in water use, with most of these seeing less than a 10 percent reduction in use.

Industries in the Pee Dee area of the state are spending significant amounts of money to deal with the drought, according to David Baize of the S.C. Department of Health and Environmental Control. Baize estimated that Pee Dee industries are spending hundreds of thousands to millions of dollars on measures such as installment of water-saving devices, digging new wells and building retention ponds and cooling towers.

Jim Witkowski of International Paper, representing the Central Drought Management Committee, said: "We have seen most industries within the Central Drought Management Area take action wherever possible to reduce water use. Most companies have seen significant water-use reduction since the call for voluntary conservation." Witkowski said the International Paper plant in Eastover has reduced its water use by 1.7 million gallons a day.

Wildfire losses continue to grow, according to Ken Cabe, information officer with the S.C. Forestry Commission. Since Jan. 1, Forestry Commission firefighters have responded to more than 4,000 wildfires across the state. These fires damaged or destroyed 77 homes, 120 outbuildings, 75 vehicles and almost 40,000 acres of woods and grasslands. Firefighters say that fires are becoming harder to control, as heavy logs and stumps now ignite and burn intensely.

The Climate Prediction Center (CPC) forecast continues to call for below normal rainfall for September through October 2002 in the mid-Atlantic states and southward through North Carolina and northern South Carolina. Hope Mizzell emphasized that even with normal rainfall this fall October and November are traditionally our driest months with an average of 3.42 inches in October and 3.16 inches in November. The CPC forecast calls for normal to above normal precipitation for South Carolina from December through April. Mizzell explained that this forecast is based on the expected development and intensification of the El Nino phenomenon in the equatorial Pacific. A moderate El Nino usually brings South Carolina above normal winter and early spring rainfall.

Contact Dr. Mizzell in Columbia at (803) 734-9568 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: 08-26-2002

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

County	Status
Marlboro	Extreme
McCormick	Extreme
Newberry	Extreme
Oconee	Extreme
Orangeburg	Extreme
Pickens	Extreme
Richland	Extreme
Saluda	Extreme
Spartanburg	Extreme
Sumter	Extreme
Union	Extreme
Williamsburg	Extreme
York	Extreme