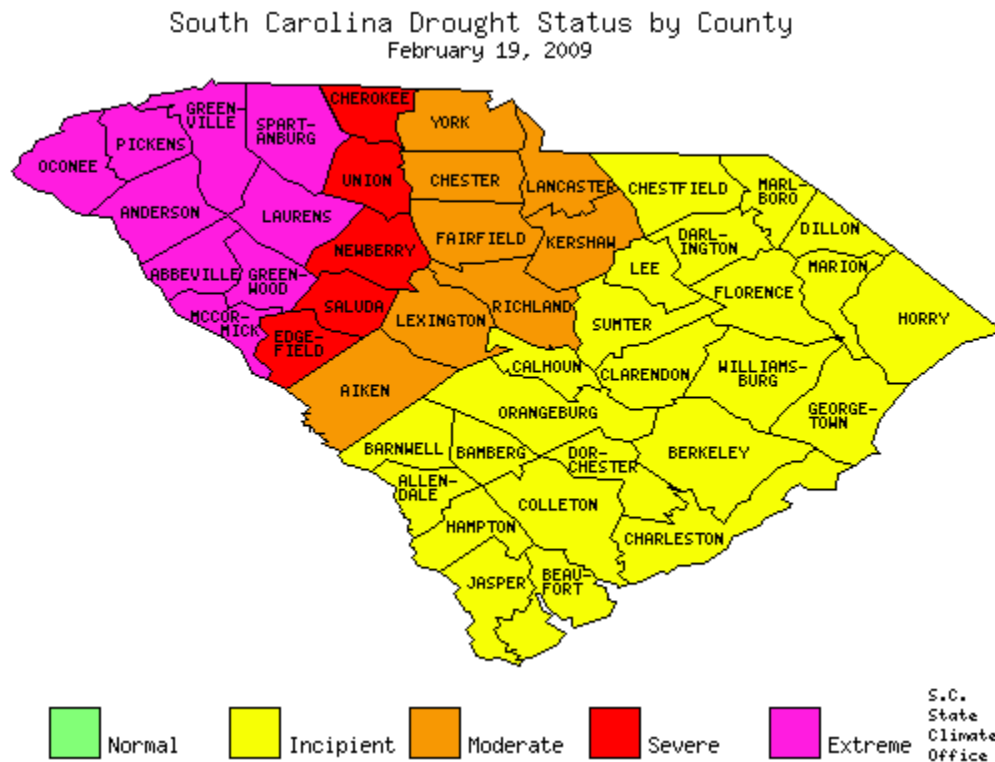


South Carolina Current Drought Status

State Climate Office 803-734-9100
SPECIAL NEWS RELEASE 09-01 DNR News 803-734-3815
February 19, 2009

All of State's counties now in drought status



Discussion:

The S.C. Department of Natural Resources convened the S.C. Drought Response Committee on Feb. 19 in Columbia. Nine counties were maintained at the extreme level. Recent dry conditions prompted the Drought Response Committee to upgrade the drought declaration for 16 counties along the coast and Pee Dee region from no drought status to incipient: Chesterfield, Marlboro, Darlington, Dillon, Florence, Marion, Horry, Williamsburg, Georgetown, Berkeley, Dorchester, Charleston, Colleton, Beaufort, Hampton and Jasper.

Dry conditions continue in the Upstate where nine counties remain in extreme drought. The counties remaining in the extreme category are: Oconee, Pickens, Greenville, Spartanburg, Anderson, Abbeville, Laurens, Greenwood and McCormick.

Five counties in the Catawba-Wateree River Basin were downgraded to moderate status: York, Chester, Fairfield, Lancaster and Kershaw.

For more information about drought and to see a drought status by county map, visit the Office of State Climatology [drought web site](#).

The Drought Committee voted unanimously on a resolution to support a recent request by the S.C. Department of Natural Resources (DNR), S.C. Department of Health and Environmental Control and GA Environmental Protection Division to the Savannah District Corps of Engineers. The committee requested that the Corps of Engineers expeditiously conduct an Environmental Assessment on the reduction of minimum releases from Lake Thurmond from 3600 cfs (cubic feet per second) to 3100 cfs for the months of March through May 2009 in order to help mitigate the effects of the drought in the Savannah Basin.

Hope Mizzell, South Carolina state climatologist, reported the long-lead forecast continues to project below normal rainfall through April.

According to DNR hydrologist Masaaki Kiuchi only one of the 17 statewide stream flow gauges shows no drought, "Currently 12 of the 17 gauges are in extreme drought. Our continued concern is the serious situation of low lake levels in the Savannah River Basin."

Darryl Jones with the S.C. Forestry Commission reported the state is entering the dry season with February already experiencing above average forest fires, "Given the forecast, I think we can expect greater forest fire activity and this increase can be attributed to the dry fuels resulting from the drought."

Recognizing that spring brings a time of increasing water use, the committee approved a recommendation that urged individuals in the extreme drought counties to carefully consider their water needs and reduce unnecessary water use.

Michael G. McShane, DNR Board Chairman, addressed the committee in regards to ongoing water resource management efforts. DNR developed a statewide water plan in 1998 that was revised in 2004. Plans are to initiate an update later this year. Also the Governor's Savannah River Committee is making good progress on a number of interstate water issues.

Contact Hope 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: 02-19-2009

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

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