

South Carolina Current Drought Status

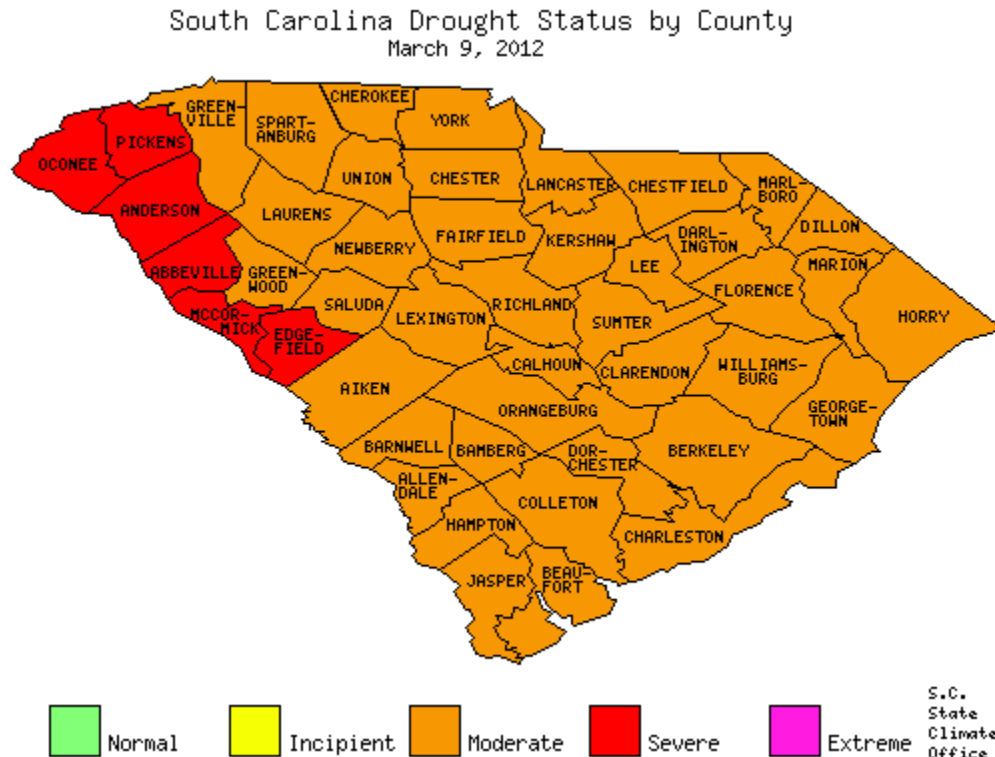
State Climate Office

NEWS RELEASE

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March 9, 2012

South Carolina Drought Response Committee maintains drought status statewide



Discussion:

Six Upstate counties (Oconee, Pickens, Anderson, Abbeville, McCormick and Edgefield) will stay in severe drought and the remaining counties in moderate drought after the SC Drought Response Committee met in Columbia, March 8, to review long-term drought impacts and conditions leading into spring.

"While coverage and rainfall amounts in March have increased, there was not enough improvement in the drought indicators to support a stage upgrade," explained Ken Rentiers, Drought Committee Chairman and SCDNR Deputy Director for Land, Water, and Conservation. "The committee will reconvene in one month to reevaluate." Overall December-February's rainfall was below normal statewide with the driest conditions from the midlands to the coast.

For the climatological winter, December 1-February 29, 2012:

- -The 6th driest for Charleston since 1948 receiving only 3.56" (9.78" long-term average)
- -The 3rd driest for Columbia since 1948 with 5.27" (10.41" long-term average)
- -The 9th driest for Florence since 1948 with 5.40" (9.16" long-term average)

Hope Mizzell, SC State Climatologist, reported, "Fortunately for the many areas that were dry earlier this winter, the pattern seems to have changed over the past 3 weeks with many sites reporting 150% of normal rainfall. The opposite is true for the Upstate. Portions of the Upstate experienced wet conditions in December-January, but over the last 3 weeks rainfall totals are less than 30% of normal."

Scott Harder, Hydrologist, SC Department of Natural Resources reported, "We depend on winter rainfall to recharge our surface and groundwater supplies when evaporation rates are low. While recent rains have helped, we haven't received as much recharge as we would like at this point in the year. We have a few more weeks before residential water demand and evaporation rates will increase significantly. Depending on the rainfall pattern over these few weeks, some of the major lakes and even smaller ponds that are below normal may not refill this spring."

Marion Rizer, Southern Drought Management Area Committee Representative, stressed, "That from the agricultural perspective it really matters how much rainfall we receive from now throughout the growing season, but because of the dry winter, farmers that irrigate are concerned about water availability since many of their farm irrigation ponds are so low."

Dennis Chastain, West Drought Management Area Committee Representative, commented, "The upper portion of the Savannah River Basin received some really good rain throughout early winter, but the beneficial effects are fading and long-term trends indicate the drought will continue."

The Savannah Basin Lakes are in Drought trigger level 2 according to the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Drought Contingency Plan. Based on projections, lake levels will remain in trigger level 2 over the next 10 weeks. Lake Hartwell and Lake Thurmond are 6.5 feet below their target guide curves for this time of year and Lake Jocassee is 21 ft. below its guide curve.

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: 03-09-2012

County	Status
Abbeville	Severe
Aiken	Moderate
Allendale	Moderate
Anderson	Severe
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	Severe
Fairfield	Moderate
Florence	Moderate
Georgetown	Moderate
Greenville	Moderate
Greenwood	Moderate
Hampton	Moderate
Horry	Moderate
Jasper	Moderate
Kershaw	Moderate
Lancaster	Moderate
Laurens	Moderate
Lee	Moderate
Lexington	Moderate
Marion	Moderate

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