

South Carolina Current Drought Status

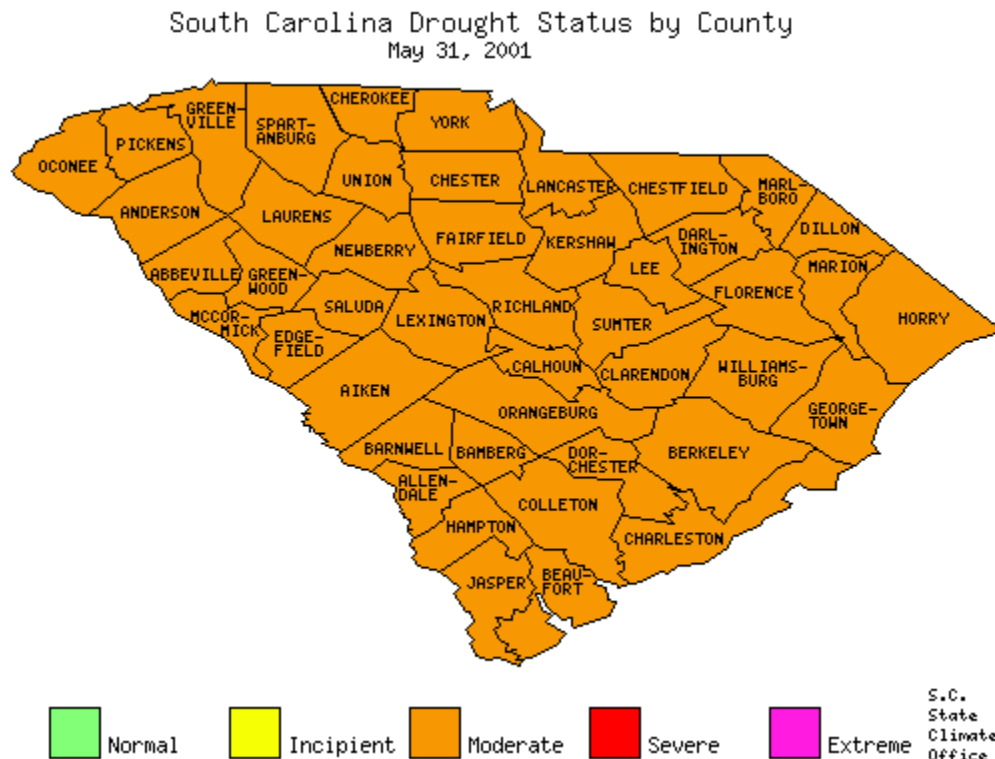
State Climate Office

NEWS RELEASE

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May 31, 2001

COMMITTEE DECLARES MODERATE DROUGHT ACROSS ENTIRE STATE



For previously issued drought statements [see the archived status reports](#).

[Table of all counties and drought status.](#)

[Drought Response Committee Meeting Sign-In sheet.](#)

State and local Drought Response Committee members declared a "moderate" drought status for the entire state Wednesday, May 30.

The state and local Drought Response Committee, which met Wednesday, May 30, in Columbia to review conditions and discuss the state's drought status, approved a four-part

motion made by Dean Moss, committee member and general manager of the Beaufort/Jasper Water and Sewer Authority in Beaufort.

The four-part motion provided that: 1) A moderate drought condition is declared for the entire state. 2) The probability of going to severe drought status is high and depends on how much rainfall the state receives over the next two to three weeks. 3) Agriculture, as an economic sector, is already in what appears to be a nearly crisis situation. Rainfall is needed to replenish irrigation supplies and enable crop production. 4) The committee advises all water users that in the near future the situation could become critical. Contingency plans should be made to ensure adequate water supplies in the event of a future serious water shortage.

The committee's decision upgrades the status of two coastal counties, Beaufort and Charleston, along with nine Pee Dee counties - Chesterfield, Darlington, Dillon, Florence, Georgetown, Horry, Marion, Marlboro and Williamsburg - from an "incipient" drought, the first drought level, to the next level of "moderate" drought. The committee stopped short of declaring a "severe" drought status for portions of the Upstate as some had anticipated. The 35 remaining South Carolina counties already listed in the "moderate" drought level remained unchanged.

A moderate drought declaration, the second of four drought levels specified in the S.C. Drought Response Act of 2000, means that drought conditions have continued to deteriorate and are expected to persist.

Freddy Vang, deputy director of the S.C. Department of Natural Resources (DNR) Land, Water and Conservation Division, says this is just the beginning of the process. "Long-term forecast projections have been remarkably accurate," Vang said. "Based on the outlook, there is a strong probability that the situation is going to get worse between July and October when we have above-normal temperatures and low stream flows. It's prudent that we declare the entire state in moderate drought status with the condition that we continue to monitor. Without significant rainfall we may have to reconvene and upgrade to severe."

Masaaki Kiuchi, S.C. Department of Natural Resources (DNR) hydrologist, reported groundwater, streamflows and lake levels across the state remain very low. Recent rain should increase streamflow across the state for a short period of time.

Recreational boaters are urged to watch dropping water levels in streams and lakes that could create hazardous conditions and to proceed with extreme caution. Major Alvin Taylor, DNR coordinator of boating safety programs, urges all boaters to be alert to the new water hazards such as shallow water, stumps, logs and old pilings and rocks created by falling waters.

Kiuchi says as temperatures rise and the demand is higher, water should be retained in the lakes as much as possible. The shallow groundwater table in the Coastal Plain and Upstate have benefited from recent rain. However, the response to rain in the Upstate is slow.

David Baize, a director in the bureau of water at the S.C. Department of Health and Environmental Control (DHEC), says DHEC has contacted water suppliers and dischargers informing them of the status of the drought. "Dischargers are advised to maximize treatment and minimize discharges," Baize said. "DHEC continues to monitor stream quality accordingly."

Water suppliers are advised to take appropriate actions to help ensure adequate water for their customers and to notify DHEC of any problems."

Ken Cabe of the S.C. Forestry Commission says recent showers have temporarily improved wildfire conditions, but wildland fire managers say the relief may be short-lived. "So far this month, wildfire occurrence has been twice what is normally expected for May," Cabe said. "During the month, Forestry Commission firefighters have already responded to 670 wildland blazes that burned more than 3,000 acres of forest land."

But fire is only one area where drought is impacting the state's woodlands. Foresters say if the drought continues, many of the tree seedlings planted last winter are expected to die. If so, this could be the second year in a row for significant reforestation failures due to dry weather. The DNR will continue to monitor the situation and provide updates as needed. Integrated drought information is available on the DNR's State Climatology Office Internet Web Site

STATION	Precipitation (Inches)	Deviation From 30 Year Normal
Conway	155.6	3.5
Dillon	128.8	-6.9
Florence 8E	126.9	-10.4
Orangeburg 2	122.8	-17.8
Bishopville 8NNW	118.0	-17.9
Walterboro 2SW	135.3	-18.1
Saluda	126.8	-18.4
Camden 3W	117.5	-20.8
Chester 1NW	122.0	-23.2
Cheraw	121.7	-23.9
Charleston AFB	130.2	-24.3
Edgefield 3NNE	112.0	-26.6
Johnston 4SW	120.6	-27.0
Fort Mill 4NW	115.2	-27.3
Sumter	116.1	-28.1
Beaufort 7SW	122.4	-31.1
Aiken 4NE	117.9	-35.0
Union 8SW	112.3	-38.6
Clemson Univ.	123.7	-39.4
GRNVL SPART WSO	109.5	-44.2
Cleveland 4S	133.3	-48.2
Walhalla	135.3	-49.2

Drought Status Table

Current Drought Status by County				
Normal	Incipient	Moderate	Severe	Extreme
County Status	County Status	County Status	County Status	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
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				