

“I’ve been on the Drought Committee a long time, and I’ve never seen a drought cycle develop and deteriorate so quickly,” said Dennis Chastain, a well-known naturalist and West Area Drought committee member from Pickens. “In my opinion three things account for this; the

rainfall deficit, the abnormally high temperatures and the wind, which has significantly increased evaporation. All three factors have worked together to quickly exasperate the drought.”

In Upstate areas hit hard in recent weeks by higher temperatures and lack of rainfall, some crops are withering, and the first cutting of hay has been poor, reported committee member Brad Boozer, who represents the S.C. Department of Agriculture. Boozer described hearing from row crop farmers in some areas of the state that late-planted fields of corn and soybeans have, in some cases, failed to germinate due to lack of rainfall, and from some Upstate farmers who reported purchasing hay for livestock due to the lack of available grass. Such agriculture-related concerns prompted committee members to take the somewhat unusual step of moving Pickens, Oconee, Anderson and Abbeville counties directly into moderate status, skipping the typical lower-level stage of “incipient”.

According to Blake Badger, with the U.S. Dept. of Agriculture’s Farm Service Agency, pasture conditions are deteriorating further, resulting in some producers reducing cattle inventory. Several meeting participants expressed concern over the long-term availability of hay for livestock feeding.

The table below provides selected station rainfall totals and departure from normal values for the period June 1 – July 8.

STATION NAME	Observation (Inches)	Departure
Cleveland	1.93	-4.27
Anderson County Airport	0.07	-4.10
Charleston AFB	3.42	-3.90
Greenville-Spartanburg	1.32	-3.62
Columbia Metro	2.65	-3.60
Newberry	1.86	-3.52
Santuck	2.46	-2.40
Chester	4.23	-1.22
Florence Regional	4.97	-0.42
Clark Hill	4.94	0.19
Sullivans Island	6.27	0.31
Manning	6.66	0.35
Marion	7.36	1.66
Cheraw	10.58	4.65

According to Mizzell, extreme temperatures, which increase evapotranspiration and cause low and decreasing soil moisture, can create a situation that is often referred to as a “flash drought.” A flash drought develops rapidly with impacts observed quickly, especially to agriculture.

Daryl Jones, S.C. Forestry Commission Forest Protection Chief, reported that since late June, fire ignitions have been increasing and the SCFC is preparing for an active late summer to early fall fire season.

Scott Harder, a hydrologist with the DNR, advised the committee that the recent below normal rainfall has led to notable declines in streamflow levels in the declared counties. The drop in streamflow combined with the increased evaporation from above normal temperatures has also caused small, but ongoing declines in reservoir levels in the Saluda and Savannah Basins. According to National Weather Service Senior Hydrologist/Meteorologist Leonard Vaughan, the short term forecast calls for temperatures to remain above normal with little to no improvement in rainfall chances across the Palmetto State for the next one to two weeks.

There was discussion and recognition by the Committee following the water system status report provided by S.C. Dept. of Health and Environmental Control Bureau of Water Chief David Baize, that thankfully at this point, there have been no reports of drought-related water supply problems. The primary impacts at this point are to agriculture, with an increasing concern for wildfires. The Committee will continue to monitor the situation closely and if conditions deteriorate the DNR's Office of State Climatology will reconvene the committee as needed.

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 Table

Current Drought Status by County				
Normal	Incipient	Moderate	Severe	Extreme
County Status	County Status	County Status	County Status	County Status
ABBEVILLE Moderate	AIKEN Incipient	ALLENDALE Incipient	ANDERSON Moderate	BAMBERG Incipient
BARNWELL Incipient	BEAUFORT Normal	BERKELEY Incipient	CALHOUN Incipient	CHARLESTON Incipient
CHEROKEE Incipient	CHESTER Incipient	CHESTERFIELD Normal	CLARENDON Incipient	COLLETON Incipient
DARLINGTON Normal	DILLON Normal	DORCHESTER Incipient	EDGEFIELD Incipient	FAIRFIELD Incipient
FLORENCE Normal	GEORGETOWN Normal	GREENVILLE Incipient	GREENWOOD Incipient	HAMPTON Incipient
HORRY Normal	JASPER Normal	KERSHAW Normal	LANCASTER Normal	LAURENS Incipient
LEE Normal	LEXINGTON Incipient	MARION Normal	MARLBORO Normal	MCCORMICK Incipient
NEWBERRY Incipient	OCONEE Moderate	ORANGEBURG Incipient	PICKENS Moderate	RICHLAND Incipient
SALUDA Incipient	SPARTANBURG Incipient	SUMTER Incipient	UNION Incipient	WILLIAMSBURG Normal
YORK Incipient				