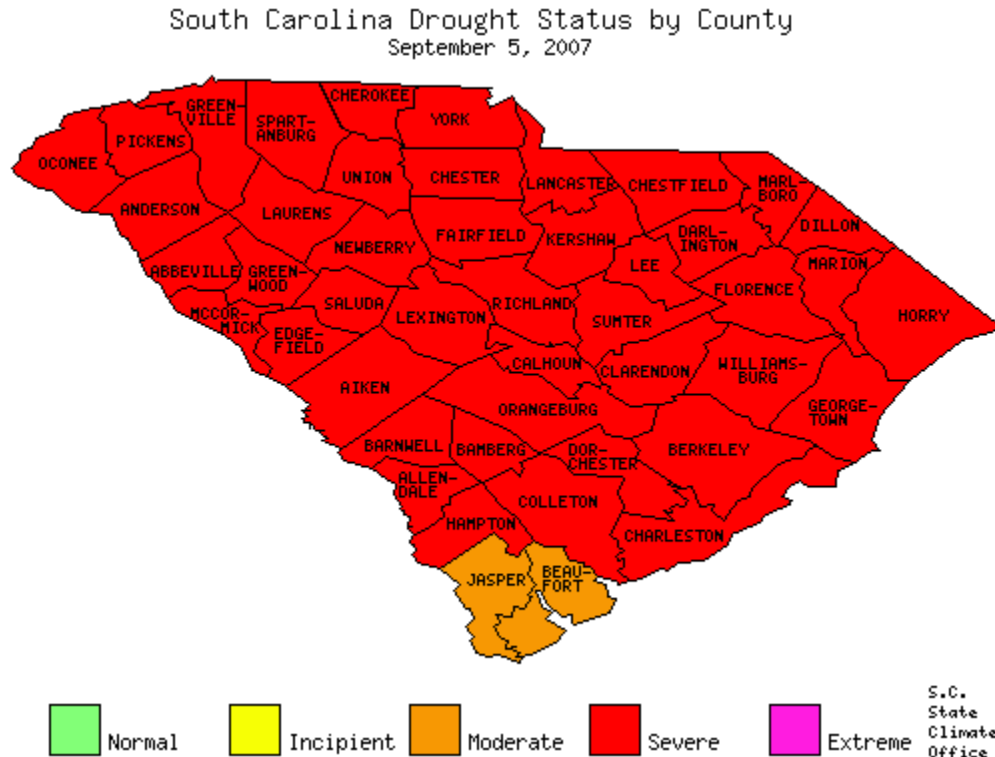


South Carolina Current Drought Status

State Climate Office (803) 734-9100
SPECIAL NEWS RELEASE #07-26
Statement Date: September 5, 2007:

STATE DROUGHT RESPONSE COMMITTEE UPGRADES S.C. TO 'SEVERE' STATUS FOR ALL COUNTIES EXCEPT BEAUFORT AND JASPER



The state and local representatives from the Drought Response Committee decided September 5, 2007 that conditions have continued to deteriorate. The Committee upgraded the drought level to severe for all counties except Beaufort and Jasper. Drought levels are declared in four stages from incipient to moderate, severe followed by extreme. The state has been under a moderate drought declaration since June 6, 2007.

According to Hope Mizzell, SC State Climatologist, there was general consensus that most counties should be upgraded based on the drought impact to agriculture, forestry, and hydrology. Beaufort and Jasper were excluded due the heavy rainfall received over the past two weeks. There was also discussion about the potential rainfall from the low-pressure system off the coast, however, the committee agreed they could not make a drought declaration based on a forecast. The committee will closely monitor the system and if significant rain is received and conditions improve in areas they will reconvene. Likewise local committee members recognized that some indicators supported an extreme declaration for portions of the upstate and this would also be monitored closely.

While there is no recommendation for mandatory water restrictions from the SC Drought Response Committee there may be restrictions that result from local water system ordinances going to the severe level. The committee does hope the upgrade will increase awareness and water systems and industries are encouraged to closely monitor conditions and implement their local drought plans as needed. For more information about drought, visit the Office of State Climatology Web site at <http://www.dnr.sc.gov/climate/sco/> or contact State Climatologist Hope Mizzell at (803) 734-9568 in Columbia.

Forestry and agriculture had reports of increasing concern about conditions. According to David Tompkins with the S.C. Department of Agriculture, "I've talked to a lot of people around the state, and few have received adequate moisture. Especially hard hit have been soybeans and cotton. Livestock producers are concerned about the lack of feed and forage going into winter. We've got to get a long period of normal rainfall to get back where we need to be."

Darryl Jones, Forest Protection Chief with the S.C. Forestry Commission stated, "The prolonged dry weather has negatively impacted forest resources in the state. In July and August, the SC Forestry Commission responded to 518 wildfires that burned more than 2,730 acres. Wildfire occurrence in July and August is typically very low. Fires have burned more intensely, requiring more personnel and equipment to control, and the high temperatures have made it much harder on our firefighters. Without widespread rainfall, the fall wildfire season, which typically occurs in October and November, has the potential to be very active."

State Hydrologist Bud Badr reported all lake levels are below normal (except Lake Murray, which is slightly above normal). Badr reports 12 of 17 drought-monitoring stations around the state are in a drought category with two in Severe and ten in Extreme. David Baize with S.C. Department of Health and Environmental Control reported that his agency has received reports of 15 water systems with water restrictions in place. Ten are reporting voluntary restrictions with five reporting mandatory.

Power generating facilities have implemented their federally approved drought protocols and plans. Water suppliers have also implemented local drought measures. "The SC Drought Response Committee's decision demonstrates that coordination and consistency between local, state, and federal drought response is important for effective drought planning and management," said Steve de Kozlowski of the S.C. Department of Natural Resources (DNR) Interim Deputy Director.

Drought Status Table

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