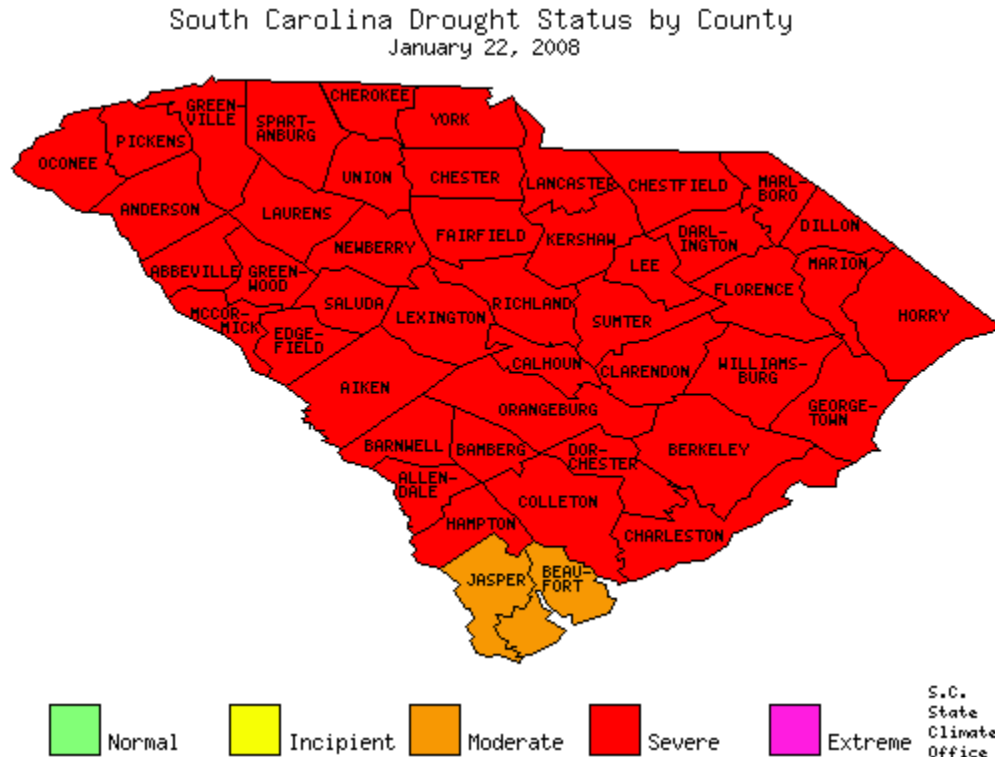


# South Carolina Current Drought Status

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**'SEVERE' DROUGHT STATUS MAINTAINED FOR ALL COUNTIES EXCEPT  
BEAUFORT, JASPER COUNTIES.**



The S.C. Drought Response Committee met today in Columbia and decided to maintain the drought status at "severe" for all South Carolina counties except Jasper and Beaufort, which will remain at moderate. While the committee recognized that precipitation has been above normal for the past 30 days, it has not been enough to return streamflows, ground water, and reservoirs to the moderate drought status. The Committee was also concerned because forecasters expect a return to below normal rainfall for February through April 2008.

Most of the streamflows are still well below the normal flows for this time of year, many reservoirs are below normal elevations, and groundwater levels have only slowly started to improve from near record low levels according to Masaaki Kiuchi, DNR Hydrology. According to Daryl Jones, SC Forestry Commission, there were double the number of fires and acres burned during the Fall 2007 fire season. Recent rains provided short-term relief, but as the state enters its traditional fire season, February - April, the SC Forestry Commission is preparing for higher than normal fire activity. Rain events over the past six weeks have dampened light fuels, but the moisture content inside larger fuels (i.e., downed logs) is still very low. David Tompkins, SC Department of Agriculture, explained the above normal rainfall over

the past few weeks has resulted in adequate to a surplus of soil moisture, but because irrigation ponds were so low they are only slowly responding to the much needed rain.

Jim Witkowski, International Paper and the Industry Representative from the Central Drought Management Area, said "Although several counties, from the Midlands to the coast, could have been downgraded to moderate based on individual drought indices, the Central Drought Management representatives decided to maintain the severe status because of the continuing long-term effects of the drought." Andy Ferry, Charleston Commission of Public Works (CPW) and Southern Drought Response Committee water system representative also emphasized that regardless of recent higher than normal rainfall events, the Southern Drought Management Committee decided to keep the area under a severe drought level because the drought is a long-term, statewide issue, not just a local one. A key factor for the Southern Drought Management Area was the continued very low elevation of Lake Marion and Lake Moultrie.

Steve de Kozlowski, Interim DNR Land, Water and Conservation Deputy Director, said the general consensus among the committee was that it is too early to downgrade the drought status especially with a below normal precipitation forecast for the next 90 days. Lakes, rivers, and groundwater levels remain at low levels. The committee will meet again in April to determine the drought status going into the growing season and as water demand starts to increase.

The S.C. Drought Response Committee commended water systems that have taken action to conserve water and encouraged all systems to continue the message of water conservation. Hope Mizzell, SC State Climatologist, reported that based on a survey to water systems, 56% of the SC population is under voluntary water conservation and 26% are in mandatory. For a full list of those water systems that have implemented conservation actions, please visit our DNR Office of State Climatology Drought Information Center Web site at [http://www.dnr.sc.gov/climate/sco/Drought/drought\\_water\\_restriction.php](http://www.dnr.sc.gov/climate/sco/Drought/drought_water_restriction.php).

Please contact Hope Mizzell if you have additional questions, 803-734-9568 or 803-530-5793.

### 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				