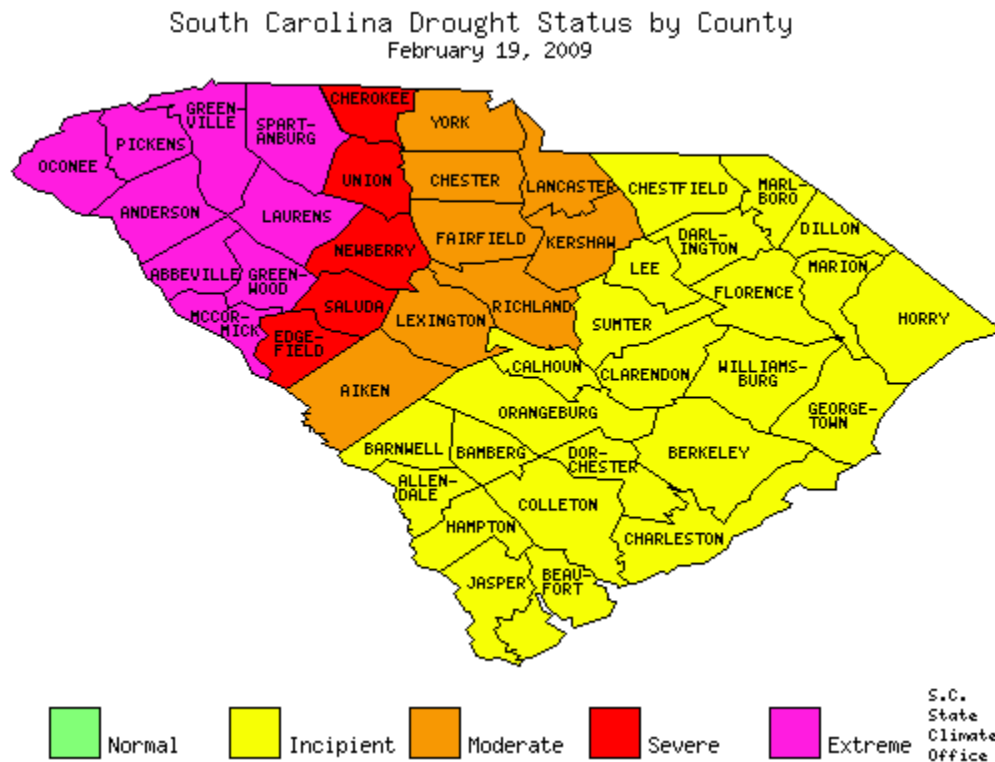


South Carolina Current Drought Status

State Climate Office 803-734-9100
SPECIAL NEWS RELEASE 09-01 DNR News 803-734-3815
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All of State's counties now in drought status



Discussion:

The S.C. Department of Natural Resources convened the S.C. Drought Response Committee on Feb. 19 in Columbia. Nine counties were maintained at the extreme level. Recent dry conditions prompted the Drought Response Committee to upgrade the drought declaration for 16 counties along the coast and Pee Dee region from no drought status to incipient: Chesterfield, Marlboro, Darlington, Dillon, Florence, Marion, Horry, Williamsburg, Georgetown, Berkeley, Dorchester, Charleston, Colleton, Beaufort, Hampton and Jasper.

Dry conditions continue in the Upstate where nine counties remain in extreme drought. The counties remaining in the extreme category are: Oconee, Pickens, Greenville, Spartanburg, Anderson, Abbeville, Laurens, Greenwood and McCormick.

Five counties in the Catawba-Wataree River Basin were downgraded to moderate status: York, Chester, Fairfield, Lancaster and Kershaw.

For more information about drought and to see a drought status by county map, visit the Office of State Climatology [drought web site](#).

The Drought Committee voted unanimously on a resolution to support a recent request by the S.C. Department of Natural Resources (DNR), S.C. Department of Health and Environmental Control and GA Environmental Protection Division to the Savannah District Corps of Engineers. The committee requested that the Corps of Engineers expeditiously conduct an Environmental Assessment on the reduction of minimum releases from Lake Thurmond from 3600 cfs (cubic feet per second) to 3100 cfs for the months of March through May 2009 in order to help mitigate the effects of the drought in the Savannah Basin.

Hope Mizzell, South Carolina state climatologist, reported the long-lead forecast continues to project below normal rainfall through April.

According to DNR hydrologist Masaaki Kiuchi only one of the 17 statewide stream flow gauges shows no drought, "Currently 12 of the 17 gauges are in extreme drought. Our continued concern is the serious situation of low lake levels in the Savannah River Basin."

Darryl Jones with the S.C. Forestry Commission reported the state is entering the dry season with February already experiencing above average forest fires, "Given the forecast, I think we can expect greater forest fire activity and this increase can be attributed to the dry fuels resulting from the drought."

Recognizing that spring brings a time of increasing water use, the committee approved a recommendation that urged individuals in the extreme drought counties to carefully consider their water needs and reduce unnecessary water use.

Michael G. McShane, DNR Board Chairman, addressed the committee in regards to ongoing water resource management efforts. DNR developed a statewide water plan in 1998 that was revised in 2004. Plans are to initiate an update later this year. Also the Governor's Savannah River Committee is making good progress on a number of interstate water issues.

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