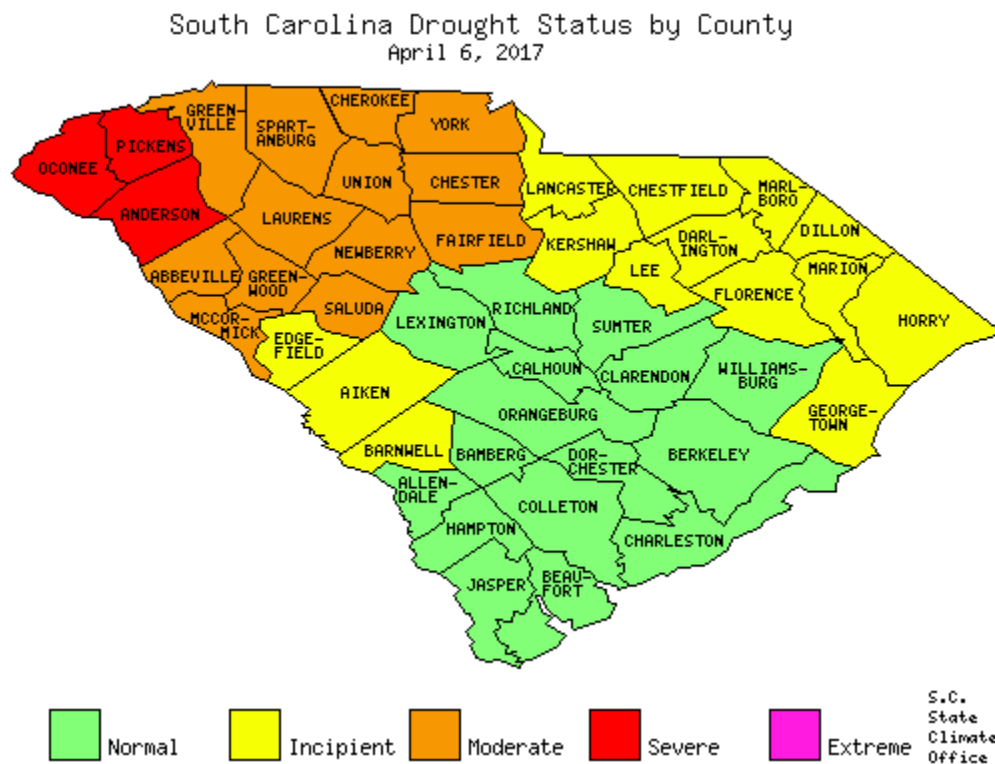


South Carolina Current Drought Status

State Climate Office
NEWS RELEASE
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Drought committee makes few changes to S.C. drought statuses



The South Carolina Drought Response Committee met via conference call Thursday to analyze the drought statuses of counties statewide. While the state has seen rainfall during the last six weeks, some areas continue to battle a level of drought and are trying to recover from long-term lack of precipitation.

All of the Northeast counties are now classified as incipient- that's an upgrade for all counties with the exception of Lancaster and Kershaw, which were already at incipient status. The Central counties stayed the same with the exception of Georgetown County, which was upgraded to incipient status. And all counties in the West and South regions maintained their current statuses.

"Rains over the last two weeks have accelerated field preparation and corn planting," S.C. Department of Agriculture Assistant Commissioner Aaron Wood stated. "Winter wheat, cool-season pasture, spring forage, and early-season vegetable yields look to be down because of poor growing conditions."

Reports show soil moisture across the state is below the five-year average, and this information raises cause for concern as South Carolina approaches the growing season and warmer weather.

“You have to understand that we have been very dry for a very long time, and wet for a short period of time,” Naturalist and West Area Drought Committee Member Dennis Chastain said. “There has been some conspicuous improvement in the upper levels of the soil and the near term looks good for the beginning of the planting season, but at the deeper levels the soil is still very dry. And these upper Savannah reservoirs look like what you would see during a long hot, dry summer.”

According to the South Carolina Forestry Commission (SCFC), wildfire activity in March was 70 percent higher than usual for this time of the year. But the recent rains have played a role in reducing the potential for short-term danger.

“Wildfire activity normally peaks in April, so we do expect to have an uptick in fires through the rest of the month,” SCFC Forest Protection Chief Darryl Jones pointed out, “until ‘greenup’ occurs, when the grasses and other plants on the forest floor begin growing.”

Lugoff-Elgin Water Authority Manager Mike Hancock added that some regions are interdependent due to the waterways flowing through neighboring counties and states, and those circumstances have to be taken into consideration when the committee discusses the possibility of changing drought statuses.

“The Catawba-Wateree Basin is in Low Inflow Protocol Stage 1 Drought according to Duke’s Drought Management Plan, which provided additional support for maintaining incipient at least along the waterway” he stated.

The Upstate counties will remain in their current drought statuses due to low streamflow levels and notable declines in water levels for reservoirs in the Savannah and Saluda Basins. The recent rains improved streamflow conditions, but those improved conditions are expected to only be temporary.

“The Pee Dee region has experienced below-normal streamflow conditions over the past several months and supported an upgrade for the counties in this region to be changed to incipient drought,” SCDNR Hydrologist Scott Harder said.

“Even though we have had significant rainfall in the last few days, the Drought Response Committee members representing the ten-county Northeast drought management area agreed to place these counties in the incipient drought status, Clemson Extension Agronomy Agent Patricia DeHond added. “Until recently, we were behind in soil moisture. And current drought indices, streamflow and lake levels all indicate drought conditions are moderate to incipient, with little to no additional rainfall in the forecast for the next two weeks.”

The committee will meet by the end of May to discuss drought conditions and change county drought statuses if necessary.

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