

South Carolina Drought News Release

**South Carolina Department of Natural Resources
Land, Water and Conservation Division
South Carolina Drought Response Program
Department of Natural Resources News (803) 734-4133**

SPECIAL NEWS RELEASE December 3, 1998 Drought Status Report

DROUGHT CONDITIONS DETERIORATE STATEWIDE

The South Carolina Department of Natural Resources is concerned about the continued deterioration of drought conditions since it declared an incipient drought on November 10th.

Statewide rainfall has averaged 58% of normal for October and November. Rainfall deficits for specific areas of the state are: 51% (Greenville), 22% (Columbia), 57% (Pinopolis) to 50% (Edisto Island) of normal. Statewide temperatures have averaged 4 degrees above normal. Preliminary results indicate the average temperature statewide for this fall (September - November) was 66 degrees, making it the third warmest fall since record keeping began in 1895.

According to State Climatologist Dr. Michael Helfert, "The unusual dryness of South Carolina and throughout the Southeast is due to the abnormal flow of the jet stream across the US. This jet stream position is controlled by a number of factors, one being the La Nina phenomenon."

The NOAA Climate Prediction Center is forecasting that this La Nina condition may persist through May 1999, which could extend our potential for drought during that period. Previous historical La Ninas have had similar strong winter and spring droughts for the Southeast US. Earlier La Nina winters have also been marked by warmer than normal temperatures.

Dr. Helfert adds, "It is possible that by spring 1999, South Carolina could be in a severe drought situation. This could pose significant problems for water suppliers, forest fire conditions, or early planting conditions for 1999."

Wildfire is already a major concern as dry conditions persist throughout the state. Fire occurrence is increasing; Forestry Commission firefighters report that intense burning is making it difficult to bring fires under control.

Anyone planning to burn outdoors should carefully follow the precautionary requirements of state and local burning laws. "This is no time to take shortcuts with fire safety," said Ken Cabe of the SC Forestry Commission.

As a result of the drought conditions, streamflows are declining. "Streamflows are extremely low in the western portion South Carolina. The lakes in the Savannah River Basin are about four feet lower than the normal stage at this time of the year," according to Dr. Bud Badr, Hydrologist with the SC Department of Natural Resources.

A survey of water suppliers across the state conducted by the SC Department of Natural Resources indicates that most reserves are adequate to meet demands at this time.

However, Freddy Vang, Deputy Director of the SC Department of Natural Resources' Land, Water and Conservation Division, stated, "All users of water should be particularly cautioned that the present drought conditions throughout our region may intensify over the next three months."

DNR will continue to monitor the situation and provide updates as needed. Integrated drought information is available on the DNR's [State Climatology Office Internet Web Site](#).

Find out more about the State Climatology Office at <http://www.dnr.sc.gov/climate/sco/> or by calling (803) 734-9100.