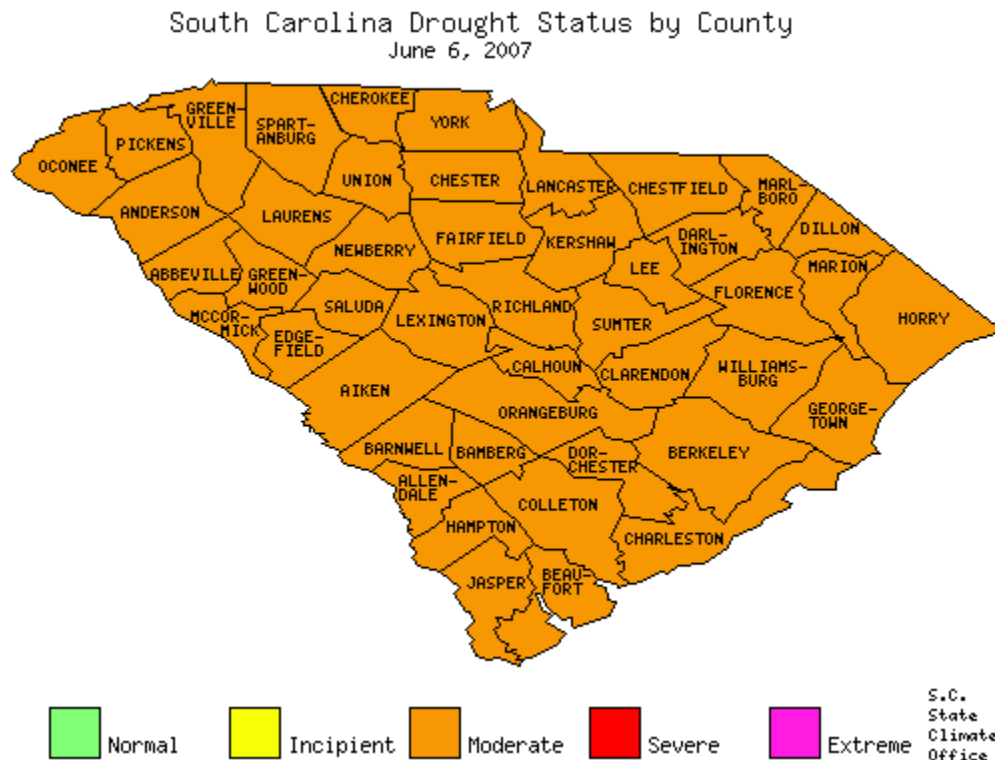


South Carolina Current Drought Status

State Climate Office (803) 734-9100
SPECIAL NEWS RELEASE
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MODERATE DROUGHT STATUS DECLARED FOR SOUTH CAROLINA



State and local Drought Response Committee members unanimously upgraded the drought level to "moderate" for the entire state of South Carolina during a meeting on Wednesday, June 6 in Columbia. The state agency representatives of the drought response committee declared an Incipient drought on May 8. Moderate drought means there is an increasing threat of a drought as demonstrated by drought indices. While the moderate declaration does not require any mandatory action by public water systems or the public, it is a signal that drought conditions are deteriorating and water systems should implement their plans and ordinances as needed. The public can do their part to conserve water such as reducing outdoor irrigation, checking for pipe leaks indoors and out. They can also pay attention to the danger of wildfires by monitoring advisories from the S.C. Forestry Commission and using extreme caution with any outdoor burning.

"The decision to upgrade the drought status to moderate was supported by the long-term rainfall deficit," said Von Snelgrove, of the DNR Land, Water and Conservation Division. "What we need to see is a significant change in the rainfall pattern, otherwise, the streams and lake levels around the state will continue to decline."

According to Hope Mizzell, South Carolina state climatologist, reports from state and local agriculture, forestry officials and the discouraging 6 to 14 day outlook for below normal precipitation and above normal temperatures were some of the factors influencing the state and local Drought Response Committee's decision to upgrade, "The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and the hydroelectric generating utilities have been taking action to conserve and manage water in their lakes. This is not an easy task given the long-term rainfall deficit. The S.C. Drought Response Committee's decision to upgrade to the second level of drought demonstrates that consistency between local, state, and federal drought response is important for effective drought planning and management."

Bud Badr, state hydrologist, explained, "11 of 17 streamflow indicators are already at some stage of drought with five of those streamflows at extreme. Groundwater levels throughout much of the state are also below normal. Power generation has been reduced to maintain the levels on hydropower lakes. Elsewhere lake levels are slightly lower than their normal levels for this time of year."

David Tompkins with the S.C. Department of Agriculture says many farmers will be facing a difficult situation if conditions don't improve, "We're concerned about what will happen the rest of this year. We need better than normal rainfall throughout the upcoming months. Some irrigation for farmers is already being utilized at a level normally seen in July."

Darryl Jones with the S.C. Forestry Commission (SCFC) expressed concern, "Recent rains have provided relief for wildfire danger in some areas of the state, but the effects of the moisture will be short-lived. Wildfire activity in May was higher than normal, and the SCFC responded to 337 wildfires that burned more than 1397 acres. The accumulated rainfall deficit has resulted in more extreme wildfire behavior and increased the amount of mop-up necessary to completely extinguish fires. Some seedling survival problems have been reported, especially for pine plantations established in late winter. While the effects of a long dry period are often not immediately noticeable, trees in most areas of the state are under stress from a lack of rainfall and more susceptible to damage from bark beetles, defoliators, and salt water influx into the soil."

David Baize with the S.C. Department of Health and Environmental Control said that six water systems are reporting voluntary restrictions with two reporting mandatory restrictions.

Mike Hancock with Lugoff-Elgin Water is a representative on the Central or Santee Basin Committee, "We entered 2007 at a deficit and have had significantly less rainfall than normal. This is having a profound effect on our forestry and especially our farmers. We feel it's appropriate to bring this situation to the public's awareness. We believe it's prudent at this time to declare a moderate drought. And, if conditions persist, we could easily deteriorate to more advanced drought conditions."

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