

## **Drought Response Committee Conference Call**

**Date: February 26th, 2025**

**Time: 10:00 a.m.**

A Drought Response Committee Conference Call was conducted at 10:00 a.m., February 26th, 2025. Notice of the date, time and call-in information was posted and provided on the [scdrought.com](http://scdrought.com) website. Chairman Ken Rentiers, Deputy Director of SC Department of Natural Resources (SCDNR) - Land, Water and Conservation Division presided at the meeting.

### **I. Introduction**

- a. Ken Rentiers (SCDNR) introduces the meeting and reads the Freedom of Information Statement. Hope Mizzell (SCDNR) states that this meeting is being recorded.
- b. Hope (SCDNR) reads the roll call. She welcomes a new representative from SC EMD.
- c. Ken calls for a motion to approve the minutes from the last meeting.
  - i. Joe Ghent, 1<sup>st</sup>
  - ii. Karolan Ohanesian, 2<sup>nd</sup>
  - iii. The motion passes unanimously.
- d. Hope discusses the upcoming Drought Tabletop Exercise that is taking place a week from today. She urges everyone to register as soon as possible, thanks EMD for hosting event, and NIDIS for sponsoring . She then proposes some general questions, as well as questions for those involved with water systems, to ponder before the event next week.

### **II. Presentation**

- a. Hope Mizzell, SCDNR
  - i. Hope (SCDNR) displays the [scdrought.com](http://scdrought.com) website and stresses the importance of routinely checking.
  - ii. Hope (SCDNR) discusses the previous meeting. The drought status did not change from the meeting in December, partly due to not having a quorum in some of the Drought Management Areas (DMA).
  - iii. Hope (SCDNR) displays the 30-day rainfall map. Overall, normal to above normal rainfall across the Upstate and below normal rainfall in the Pee Dee and along the coast.
  - iv. She shows the 60-day rainfall. Although there has been rain, much of the state is still below normal rainfall.

- v. Furthermore, she displays the 30-day Standard Precipitation Index (SPI), where stations from the midlands to the coast are either incipient or moderate.
- vi. Hope (SCDNR) shows the Tempest Data from Clemson.
- vii. Hope (SCDNR) displays the CoCoRaHS totals from each DMA.
- viii. Hope (SCDNR) shows the U.S. Drought Monitor for the last seven weeks.
- ix. She provides the Crop Moisture Index (CMI) and Palmer Drought Severity Index (PDSI).

### **III. State Agency Reports**

#### **a. Scott Harder, SCDES**

- i. Scott Harder, (SCDES), displays the USGS 14-day average streamflow percentiles from the last meeting to this week. There has been improvement across the upstate. He then showed 12 different hydrographs.
- ii. Scott provides a table to compare recent averages to historical values.
- iii. He continues with the streamflow values through the regulatory method.
- iv. He discusses the reservoir levels across the state. Lake levels are in the normal range for this time of year. He then shows the Army Corps of Engineers projected 10-week reservoir level graph for Lake Hartwell.
- v. He shows 8 graphs of groundwater levels. All are in the normal range except the gage in Charleston County.

#### **b. Darryl Jones, SC Forestry Commission**

- i. He discusses the KBDI values. Affirming earlier conversations, the coast is dry. There have been multiple fires over the last few weeks. There have been large fires in Berkeley and Horry counties. He states that we are not in peak wildfire season, but it has been very active thus far.
- ii. He fields questions from Lynn McEwen about the current prescribed burns that occur across the state. Ken Tuck asks about the short-term impacts. Darryl is concerned about the upcoming fire season. The downed trees from Helene and Debby are making it harder to access and fight fires. Hope (SCDNR) discusses a report from the Forestry Commission that shows the impacts of Hurricane Helene on the timber industry. They both stress that the KBDI is only one indicator of

forest fire potential. The KBDI values have been low before several major fires.

- c. Hope (SCDNR) asks EMD, DES, and FSA if they have had any issues, which none had anything to report. She asks for any other state agencies or partners for any more discussion, with none having any comments or recommendations.
- d. Hope (SCDNR) shows the short- and long-term forecasts.
  - i. Leonard Vaughan (NWS) states how there is a chance of rain in the short-term but nothing widespread.
- e. Hope (SCDNR) shows the drought outlook from NOAA, which remains unchanged.

#### **IV. Open Discussion and Vote**

- a. Hope (SCDNR) opens the floor for the Northeast DMA. She once again gives thanks for their early registration for the Drought Tabletop Exercise.
  - i. Clint Elliott recommends no change in drought levels. Karolan Ohanesian agrees, but she is concerned about the Waccamaw River and the streamflow levels. Joe Ghent also agrees.
  - ii. Hope (SCDNR) asks if Lancaster and Chesterfield counties can come out of drought status, but Joe Ghent recommends staying where they are.
    - 1. She asks for input from state agency members; Darryl Jones, agrees.
  - iii. Ken (SCDNR) puts forth a motion.
    - 1. Clint Elliott, 1<sup>st</sup>
    - 2. Karolan Ohanesian, 2<sup>nd</sup>
  - iv. Motion to remain the status quo passes unanimously.
- b. Hope (SCDNR) begins to discuss the Central DMA. She states the Central DMA does not have a quorum, so no official vote can be made, but those in attendance can discuss conditions.
  - i. Ken Tuck says that the upstate has received some rain.
  - ii. Fred Castles states that they have received some rain in Chester County, but it has been breezy and dry. Hope (SCDNR) agrees, but much of the area reflects an incipient drought.
  - iii. Darryl Jones (Forestry) does not believe the conditions are worsening and they should leave it where it is. Gregory Sprouse agrees; Christy Jones says that Richland and Lexington counties are not dry from her perspective.
- c. Hope (SCDNR) moves onto the Southern DMA.

- i. Jason Thompson discusses that they have received some rain, but they are still behind for the winter. He suggests leaving the counties as they are, especially after discussing the fire issues.
  - ii. Landrum Weathers agrees, and states that there has been some rain, but not enough. He does not think the status needs to be changed.
  - iii. Russell Cornette and Matthew McCants agree with the previous comments.
  - iv. Ken (SCDNR) calls for a motion to keep Orangeburg, Bamberg, Colleton in no drought status and Charleston, Berkely and Dorchester in Incipient drought.
    - 1. Jason Thompson, 1<sup>st</sup>
    - 2. Russell Cornette, 2<sup>nd</sup>
  - v. Motion passes unanimously.
- d. Hope (SCDNR) then goes to the West DMA.
  - i. Chris Rasco says that Anderson, Oconee, and Pickens counties could come out of incipient drought; they have received an adequate amount of rainfall.
  - ii. Mark Warner says that the indicators in McCormick County are a mixed bag. The streamflow levels look good, but rainfall has been below normal. He thinks Abbeville can come out of the drought status.
  - iii. Darryl Jones (Forestry) says there were some fires in the northern counties of this DMA. The KBDI does not show worsening conditions at the moment.
  - iv. Scott Harder (DES) believes the northernmost counties should come out of drought based recent rain and improved hydrological indicators.
  - v. Lynn McEwen is concerned about the rising temperatures for the next few days, but now she believes they are fine. She is located in Barnwell County.
  - vi. Brian Chemsak believes the southern area should remain in no drought.
  - vii. Rick Green agrees with the previous statements about the northern half of the DMA.
  - viii. Darryl Jones, Sam Quinney, and Scott Harder all agree with the downgrade.
  - ix. Ken (SCDNR) calls for a motion to move all counties to a normal drought status.

1. Lynn McEwen, 1<sup>st</sup>
  2. Mark Warner, 2<sup>nd</sup>
- x. Motion passes unanimously.
- e. Hope (SCDNR) reviews each map and ensures everyone agrees with the declarations.
- f. She suggests the next meeting be held on Wednesday, March 26<sup>th</sup>.
- g. The meeting is adjourned.

<b>Committee Members</b>	<b>Group</b>	<b>Attendance 02/26/2025</b>
<b>West DMA</b>		
Reg Williams	Agriculture	<b>X</b>
Cheryl Daniels	Commission of Public Works	
Mark Warner	Counties	<b>X</b>
Eric Carrier	Domestic User	
David Evans	Industry	
Lynn McEwen	Municipalities	<b>X</b>
Preston Pierce	Power Generation Facilities	
J. Scott Willett	Private Water Supplier	
Chris Rasco	Public Service District	<b>X</b>
Rick Green	Regional Council of Gov.	<b>X</b>
Yvonne Kling	Soil and Water Conservation Dist.	
Brian Chemsak	Special Purpose District	<b>X</b>
<b>Central DMA</b>		
John Irwin	Agriculture	
Ken Tuck	Commission of Public Works	<b>X</b>
Peggy Swearingen	Counties	
Christy Jones	Domestic User	<b>X</b>
Ed Holder	Industry	
James G. Bagley	Municipalities	
Alan Stuart	Power Generation Facilities	
Brad C. Powers	Private Water Supplier	<b>X</b>
	Public Service District	VACANT

Gregory Sprouse	Regional Council of Gov.	<b>X</b>
John T. Rivers	Soil and Water Conservation Dist.	
Fred Castles	Special Purpose District	<b>X</b>
<b>Northeast DMA</b>		
Caleb Miller	Agriculture	
	Commission of Public Works	VACANT
Karolan Ohanesian	Domestic User	<b>X</b>
Athena Strickland	Industry	
Clint Elliott	Municipality	<b>X</b>
	Power Generation Facilities	VACANT
	Private Water Supplier	VACANT
Alan Watkins	Counties	<b>X</b>
Elbert Warren	Public Service District	
Lindsay Privette	Regional Council of Gov.	<b>X</b>
Joe Ghent	Soil and Water Conservation Dist.	<b>X</b>
Nathan Ward	Special Purpose District	<b>X</b>
<b>Southern DMA</b>		
Landrum Weathers	Agriculture	<b>X</b>
Jason Thompson	Commission of Public Works	<b>X</b>
Larry Harper	Counties	Appointment Pend.
Chris Wallace	Domestic User	<b>X</b>
Chris Muckenfuss	Industry	Appointment Pend.
Eric Odom	Municipalities	
Matt McCants	Power Generation Facilities	<b>X</b>
	Private Water Supplier	VACANT
Russell Cornette	Public Service District	<b>X</b>
Ronald E. Mitchum	Regional Council of Gov.	
Marion L. Rizer	Soil and Water Conservation Dist.	
	Special Purpose District	VACANT
<b>State Agency Members</b>		
Ken Rentiers	SCDNR, LWC Division	<b>X</b>

Jordan Van Delden	SC Emergency Management Divis.	<b>X</b>
Joe Koon	SC Dept. of Environ. Services	<b>X</b>
Darryl Jones	SC Forestry Commission	<b>X</b>
Sam Quinney	SC Department of Agriculture	<b>X</b>
<b>Other Participants</b>		
Hope Mizzell	SCDNR, LWC Division	<b>X</b>
Melissa Griffin	SCDNR, LWC Division	<b>X</b>
Alyssa Paguaga	SCDNR, LWC Division	<b>X</b>
Glenn Thomas	FSA	<b>X</b>
Alexis Modzelesky	SCDES	<b>X</b>
Leigh Ann Monroe	SCDES	<b>X</b>
Leonard Vaughan	NWS Columbia	<b>X</b>
Scott Harder	SCDES	<b>X</b>
Elliot Wickham	NOAA	<b>X</b>
Kayla Stroman	FSDA	<b>X</b>
Dwight Cauthen	SCFB	<b>X</b>