

Drought Response Committee Conference Call

Date: January 28, 2026

Time: 10:00 a.m.

A Drought Response Committee Conference Call was conducted at 10:00 a.m., January 28, 2026. Notice of the date, time, and call-in information was posted and provided on the scdrought.com website.

I. Introduction

- a. Ken Rentiers (SCDNR) opens the meeting and reads the agenda.
 - i. Ken (SCDNR) makes notice that this meeting is being recorded.
- b. Dr. Hope Mizzell (SCDNR) conducts the Drought Committee roll call.
 - i. There is a quorum in all DMAs.
 - ii. She does a roll call of state agency members and any additional attendees.
- c. Ken Rentiers (SCDNR) puts forth a motion to approve the minutes of the last meeting, which took place on December 10, 2025
 - i. Fred Castles, 1st
 - ii. Scott Willett, 2nd
 - iii. Motion passes unanimously. Minutes have been approved.

II. PowerPoint Presentation

- a. Hope Mizzell (SCDNR) begins with the presentation.
 - i. Statewide 2025 Review – Reviewed the data and maps presented at the 2025 Year in Review presentation. Spoke about the precipitation totals and temperature rankings from the past year.
 - ii. Displays latest drought map from the latest meeting on December 10th
 - iii. 30-day, 60-day, 90-day rainfall: With some rain in the past week, the 30-day map shows some improvement in the far upstate, but dry conditions in most of South Carolina. The 60-day and 90-day precipitation maps still below normal precipitation statewide – only improvement in the short term.
 - iv. PDSI – Pockets of dry conditions, but due to long time frame does not indicate dry conditions. CMI – Some areas of moisture in the Upstate.
 - v. Drought Monitor graphics shows the change and increasing dry conditions throughout the past month. In the latest USDM data from January 22nd, the entire state is in D1 or D2 conditions.

- vi. Viewed the four DMA 30- and 60-day rainfall totals for each county – the lowest and highest total rainfall. The data supports the dry conditions across the state over the past two months.

b. State Agency Reports

- i. SCDES (Scott Harder) – 14-day percentiles across the state show much lower percentiles and the drier conditions. The base flows are not increasing as expected this time of the year, which is concerning.
 - 1. Northeast DMA – Pee Dee River gages showing some very low percentiles and dryness (1-12 percentiles).
 - 2. West DMA – The Rocky River in Anderson County is currently at its 2nd percentile streamflow.
 - 3. Central DMA – Rocky Creek, Enoree River, and South Pacolet River are sitting at very low percentile and showing dryness.
 - 4. Southern DMA – Both gages in the Edisto River at below normal stream flow and dryness.
 - 5. Reservoirs – Duke Energy’s Keowee-Toxaway is in LIP stage 1, Duke Energy’s Catawba Wateree Project is in LIP stage 0, and the USACE Savannah District has declared stage 1 drought.
 - 6. Groundwater – Three sites are at below normal levels (Greenville, Oconee, and with many other levels declining and showing some dryness).
 - a. Fred Castles asks if groundwater is shallow – not all are and there is a variety across the state.
 - 7. ii. Phil Fragapane (Duke Energy) – Keowee – With Lake Thurmond’s decline, the USACE Savannah District is likely going to be moving to LIP Stage 2 next week with a 5-10% reduction.
- iii. Tommy Mills (SC Forestry Commission) – KBDI values are at 300 to 500. Some areas where the rain/snow fell is still showing low moisture and dry conditions. Fires are low, but before the recent precipitation they were increasing.
- iv. Jordan Van Delden (SCEMD) – They are working on their last round of edits on the state EOP, which includes a drought plan.
- v. Joe Koon (SCDES) – Checked in and no issues to report.

c. PowerPoint Presentation

- i. Weekly QPF shows less than 1” across the state – not much liquid possible from this upcoming snow event.
- ii. 6–10-day outlook – Trending below normal temperatures with below normal precipitation.
- iii. Seasonal outlook – F/M/A Upcoming conditions trending warmer than normal, with drier conditions.
- iv. Frank Alsheimer (NWS CAE) – Concerning this weekend’s winter weather event, the precipitable water numbers may be low, but depending on set up, likely less than a 1” of water from this event’s snowfall. Otherwise, no other significant event over the next two weeks.

III. Open Discussion and Vote

Hope Mizzell (SCDNR):

a. West DMA

- i. Scott W. – With the low stream flows and precipitation, there is not much growing, and we should consider putting the remaining counties in incipient.
- ii. Mark W. and Lynn M. both agreed, especially with what little precipitation there is in the upcoming forecast.
- iii. Brian C. – We should be on the watch for moving into moderate next time.
- iv. Motion: Maintain counties in incipient with the addition of Oconee, Pickens, Anderson, Abbeville, and McCormick.
 1. Scott Willett, 1st.
 2. Mark Warner, 2nd
- v. Motion passes unanimously.

b. Central DMA

- i. Ken T. – With stream flow very low, the entire DMA should consider moving into incipient. With some counties so dry, should we consider some in moderate.
- ii. Fred C. – Conditions have not improved significantly, so counties should remain in incipient, with no upcoming beneficial rainfall moderate may be needed.

- iii. Alan feels the same as Fred. Not moderate status in York and Cherokee Counties yet.
- iv. Brad P. and John I. agree – move all counties to incipient.
- v. Motion: Maintain counties in incipient with the addition of Greenville, Spartanburg, Laurens, Clarendon, Williamsburg, and Georgetown.
 - 1. John Irwin, 1st
 - 2. Alan Stuart, 2nd
- vi. Motion passes unanimously.

c. Southern DMA

- i. Marion R. – There has been a strong decline, and all counties need to be incipient.
- ii. Jason T. – Stream flows are low and dry soil across the Lowcountry.
- iii. Motion: Maintain counties in incipient with the addition of Berkeley, Dorchester, and Charleston.
 - 1. Marion Rizer, 1st
 - 2. Russell Cornette, 2nd
- vi. Motion passes unanimously.

d. Northeast DMA

- i. Joe G. – Very dry conditions and all counties belong in incipient.
- ii. Motion: Maintain counties in incipient with the addition of Marlboro, Darlington, Florence, Dillon, Marion, and Horry.
 - 1. Joe Ghent, 1st
 - 2. Clint Elliott, 2nd
- vi. Motion passes unanimously.

IV. Closing Remarks

- a. Hope (SCDNR) the discussion begins on next meeting date. February 26th or March 5th? March 5, 2026, was selected for the next meeting.
- b. Ken (SCDNR) puts forth a motion to adjourn:
 - 1. Clint Elliott, 1st
 - 2. Fred Castles, 2nd
- c. Meeting is adjourned at 11:07 a.m. on January 28, 2026.

Committee Members	Group	Attendance 01/28/2026
West DMA		
Reg Williams	Agriculture	
Cheryl Daniels	Commission of Public Works	X
Mark Warner	Counties	X
-	Domestic User	VACANT
David Evans	Industry	X
Lynn McEwen	Municipalities	X
Preston Pierce	Power Generation Facilities	
J. Scott Willett	Private Water Supplier	X
Chris Rasco	Public Service District	
Rick Green	Regional Council of Gov.	X
Yvonne Kling	Soil and Water Conservation Dist.	X
Brian Chemsak	Special Purpose District	X
Central DMA		
John Irwin	Agriculture	X
Ken Tuck	Commission of Public Works	X
Peggy Swearingen	Counties	
Christy Jones	Domestic User	X
Ed Holder	Industry	X
James G. Bagley	Municipalities	X
Alan Stuart	Power Generation Facilities	X
Brad C. Powers	Private Water Supplier	X
-	Public Service District	VACANT
Gregory Sprouse	Regional Council of Gov.	X
John T. Rivers	Soil and Water Conservation Dist.	X
Fred Castles	Special Purpose District	X
Northeast DMA		
Caleb Miller	Agriculture	
-	Commission of Public Works	VACANT
Karolan Ohanesian	Domestic User	
Athena Strickland	Industry	

Clint Elliott	Municipality	X
-	Power Generation Facilities	VACANT
-	Private Water Supplier	VACANT
Alan Watkins	Counties	X
Elbert Warren	Public Service District	X
Lindsay Privette	Regional Council of Gov.	X
Joe Ghent	Soil and Water Conservation Dist.	X
Nathan Ward	Special Purpose District	X
Southern DMA		
Landrum Weathers	Agriculture	
Jason Thompson	Commission of Public Works	X
-	Counties	VACANT
Chris Wallace	Domestic User	
-	Industry	VACANT
Eric Odom	Municipalities	X
Matt McCants	Power Generation Facilities	
-	Private Water Supplier	VACANT
Russell Cornette	Public Service District	X
Ronald E. Mitchum	Regional Council of Gov.	
Marion L. Rizer	Soil and Water Conservation Dist.	X
-	Special Purpose District	VACANT
State Agency Members		
Ken Rentiers	SCDNR, LWC Division	X
Jordan Van Delden	SC Emergency Management Divis.	X
Joe Koon	SC Dept. of Environ. Services	X
Tommy Mills	SC Forestry Commission	X
Sam Quinney	SC Department of Agriculture	
Other Participants		
Hope Mizzell	SCDNR, LWC Division	X
Jennifer Simmons	SCDNR, LWC Division	X
Frank Alsheimer	NWS Columbia	X
Alexis Modzelesky	SCDES	X
Blair Holloway	NWS Charleston	X

Josh Palmer	NWS GSP	X
Tyler Brown	SCDNR	X
Rob Devlin	SCDES	X
Scott Harder	SCDES	X
Elliot Wickham	SEDEWS	X
Leigh Monroe	SCDES	X
Rebecca Morris	SCDES	X
Hope Morton	USDA (FPAC-FSA)	X
Andrea Kelley	Seneca Journal	X
Valerie Jackson	SC Farm Bureau	X
Phil Fragapane	Duke Energy	X
Peter Balzani	SCDES	X
Brian Lynch	Santee Cooper	X
Frank Strait	SCDNR	X