

Drought Response Committee Conference Call

Date: July 8, 2026

Time: 10:00 a.m.

A Drought Response Committee Conference Call was conducted at 10:00 a.m., July 8, 2026. Notice of the date, time, and call-in information was posted and provided on the scdrought.com website.

I. Introduction

- a. Tyler Brown (SCDNR) opens the meeting and reads the agenda.
 - i. Tyler Brown makes notice that this meeting is being recorded.
- b. 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, media, and any additional attendees.
- c. Hope Mizzell puts forth a motion to approve the minutes of the last meeting, which took place on June 11th.
 - i. Lindsay Privette, 1st
 - ii. Athena Strickland, 2nd
 - iii. Motion passes and the minutes have been approved.

II. PowerPoint Presentation

- a. Hope Mizzell begins with the presentation.
 - i. June rainfall – Preliminary statewide average expected to finish slightly below 3.0”, below the June average of 4.71”, though not among the driest on record.
 - ii. 30-day, 60-day, and 90-day rainfall – 30-day totals below normal across much of the state, with portions of the Pee Dee receiving only 10–25% of normal rainfall. 60-day totals improved across portions of the Savannah River Basin and Lower Piedmont, with isolated areas receiving 150–200% of normal. Mixed above- and below-normal conditions continue in the 90-day period.
 - iii. Tempest – Drier conditions continue across portions of the Piedmont and Coastal Plain.
 - iv. Palmer Drought Severity Index – Long-term indicator reflecting continued dry conditions, with drier areas across portions of the Upstate and Catawba-Wateree Basin.

- v. Crop Moisture Index – Showing mostly normal conditions in some areas despite not fully reflecting observed conditions on the ground.
- vi. Soil Moisture – Improvement following late June rainfall, with drying conditions returning by July 7.
- vii. SPI – 30-day SPI showing increased incipient to extreme drought conditions since the previous meeting. 60-day SPI improved across portions of the Upstate, while 90-day SPI continues showing incipient to extreme drought, primarily from south of Columbia to the coast.
- viii. US Drought Monitor – June 30 map showing D0 through D3 conditions across the state. Updated map is unavailable until the following day.
- ix. Rainfall Accumulations – Northeast, Central, Southern, and West DMAs continue showing significant rainfall variability between stations within the same county. Northeast remains one of the driest regions, while localized areas across the state received above-average rainfall despite nearby stations remaining well below average.

b. State Agency Reports

- i. SCDES (Scott) – 14-day average streamflow conditions have deteriorated since the June meeting, with below normal to well below normal conditions expanding across much of the state. Pee Dee remains the driest region, while portions of the middle Savannah and lower Saluda Basins continue showing better conditions. Regulatory status continues to lag 14-day percentile conditions.
 - 1. Northeast DMA – Black Creek, Waccamaw, and Lynches remain at or below the 5th percentile with persistent low streamflow conditions.
 - 2. West DMA - Good response to May and early June rainfall, though streamflows continue declining. Twelve Mile Creek below the 5th percentile and Coosawhatchie remains very dry.
 - 3. Central DMA – Streamflows continue declining across the DMA, with many gauges at or approaching the 5th percentile.
 - 4. Southern DMA – North Fork and Edisto responded to May rainfall but continue declining. Gauges remain normal but could enter drought status without additional rainfall.
 - 5. Lake Level – Lake levels declined statewide since the previous meeting, most notably in the Savannah Basin and Central DMA. Jocassee, Hartwell, Blalock, Murray, and Marion all showing declines. Duke Energy Keowee-Toxaway and Catawba-

Wateree projects remain in LIP Stage 2. USACE Savannah Basin remains in Stage 2 drought declaration.

6. Hartwell Reservoir Projection – Forecast showing gradual declines of approximately 1–1.5 feet through early September under below normal inflow conditions.
7. Groundwater – Groundwater conditions worsened statewide since the previous meeting, with below normal to well below normal conditions across much of the state. Portions of the Savannah and Saluda Basins remain near or above normal following earlier rainfall.
 - a. NE DMA – Lancaster remains well below normal. Dillon and Kershaw near normal but declining.
 - b. West DMA – Anderson remains near normal but declining. Oconee, Aiken, and Jasper continue below normal, with Jasper remaining especially low.
 - c. Central DMA – Greenville and York remain below normal. Saluda remains above normal following earlier rainfall but continues declining.
 - d. South DMA – Orangeburg below normal. Berkeley and Charleston showing significant declines with very low groundwater conditions.

ii. Joe Koon (SCDES) – Reported residential wells going dry in Hampton County. SCDES coordinating with affected residents.

iii. Andy Johnson (SC Forestry Commission) – Hampton, Jasper, and Colleton Counties continue showing increased wildfire activity, with several fires exceeding 100 acres during June. KBDI values remain highest from Kingstree through Jasper County, with coastal regions continuing as the primary area of concern. Upstate fire activity remains limited due to recent rainfall and green-up. Dry wells in Hampton County noted as an additional drought indicator.

iv. Hope Mizzell (SCDNR) – Reported 18–20 residential wells and one fire department well in the Nixville area of Hampton County have gone dry within the past week.

v. Nancy Meyer (Farm Service Agency) – Beaufort, Hampton, and Jasper Counties remain extremely dry. Temperatures exceeding 100°F continue devastating crops, with dryland crops largely lost.

vi. SC Dept. of Agriculture (Sam Quinney) – Dryland crops remain in very poor condition with sparse germination and significant yield losses expected. Surface water ponds beginning to dry up, with additional rainfall needed to recover from prolonged drought.

vii. NDMC Condition Monitoring Observer Reports / CoCoRaHS Condition Monitoring Reports (Hope Mizzell, SCDNR) – Reports continue documenting severe drought impacts statewide. Allendale County reported record-low pond levels and irrigation unable to meet crop demands. Sumter County reports smaller streams drying shortly after rainfall. Heat and increased evapotranspiration adding additional stress to agriculture. Encouraged continued public submission of CMOR reports. Shared condition monitoring photos from Spartanburg, Williamsburg, and Saluda Counties.

c. Short- and Long-term Forecast

- i. Seven Day Tropical Outlook – No tropical cyclone activity expected during the next seven days.
- ii. Weekly QPF – Forecast showing 1.5–1.75 inches along portions of the coast, with some Upstate locations receiving less than 1.5 inches. Rainfall expected to remain scattered with highly variable totals.
- iii. 6–10 Day Outlook – Higher likelihood of above normal temperatures and above normal precipitation across the state.
- iv. Seasonal Outlook - Higher likelihood of above normal temperatures with equal chances of above or below normal precipitation for July–September.
- v. Drought Outlook- July 1–September 30 outlook showing drought persistence across portions of the state, with some areas expected to improve or potentially be removed from drought.
- vi. NWS (Josh Palmer) – No widespread rainfall expected without a tropical system. Brief relief from the heat expected Sunday–Tuesday with increased cloud cover and better chances for showers. Long-range guidance continues showing below normal rainfall through August, with tropical activity remaining the primary wildcard. Approximately 9.5 inches (GSP), 10 inches (Columbia), and 13.5 inches.

- vii. Frank Strait (SCDNR) – El Niño research continues suggesting drier than normal conditions through July, August, and September, with a transition to a wetter, more typical El Niño pattern likely around October. Short-term rainfall expected to provide only limited drought relief.

III. Open Discussion and Vote

Hope Mizzell (SCDNR)

a. Northeast DMA

- i. Athena S.- Supports remaining in severe drought status. No indicators support a status change, with dry wells becoming an increasing concern.
- ii. Joe G.- Conditions remain very dry across Lancaster and surrounding counties. Supports remaining in severe drought status.
- iii. Sam Q.- Reports continued severe agricultural impacts across the Pee Dee and coastal counties, with insufficient moisture for crop growth and herbicide activation. Caleb Miller also supports remaining in severe drought status.
- iv. Motion: All counties remain in severe drought status across the entire Northeast DMA.
 - 1. Joe Ghent, 1st.
 - 2. Athena Strickland, 2nd
- v. Motion passes unanimously.

b. Central DMA

- i. Ken T.- Supports maintaining current drought designations. Greenville, Spartanburg, and Cherokee Counties remain in severe drought despite localized rainfall variability.
- ii. Fred C.- June rainfall below normal with conditions drying quickly. Supports Chester and southern York Counties remaining in severe drought status.
- iii. John R.- Agricultural conditions remain poor. Dryland corn largely lost, while cotton, peanuts, and soybeans still depend on additional rainfall.
- iv. Alan S.- Rainfall remains highly variable, with localized improvements not representative of overall county conditions.
- v. Sam Q.- Hay production remains behind schedule and rainfall has been inconsistent. Recommends no changes to current drought

designations, with Fairfield, Greenwood, and Saluda needing additional sustained rainfall before considering improvements.

vi. Scott H.- Supports maintaining current drought status across the Central DMA.

vii. Motion: Central DMA remains at current drought status.

Greenwood, Laurens, Union, Saluda, Newberry, Richland, and Lexington remain in moderate drought. All other counties remain in severe drought.

1. Ken Tuck, 1st

2. Peggy Swearingen, 2nd

iii. Motion passes unanimously.

c. Southern DMA-

i. Marion Rizer- Recommends all Southern DMA counties remain in severe drought status. Colleton County remains extremely dry.

ii. Jason Thompson- No widespread improvement despite scattered rainfall. Limited relief received, but conditions continue supporting severe drought status.

iii. Russ Cornette – Agrees conditions remain very dry with insufficient rainfall to justify a status change

iv. Landrum Weathers – Groundwater conditions continue worsening in some areas. D3 conditions have persisted across portions of Orangeburg and surrounding counties, with KBDI values supporting continued severe drought status.

iii. Motion: All counties remain in severe drought status.

1. Russ Cornette, 1st

2. Marion Rizer, 2nd

iv. Motion passes unanimously.

d. West DMA

i. Lynn M. - Supports Aiken, Barnwell, Allendale, and southern counties remaining at current drought status. Recommends no changes for Anderson and Abbeville until additional data is available.

ii. Mark W. - McCormick conditions have not significantly improved or worsened. Supports remaining in moderate drought status.

iii. Reg W. - Edgefield County agricultural conditions continue worsening. Hay production significantly delayed with major crop impacts. Recommends moving Edgefield to severe drought status.

- iv. Sam Q. - Agricultural impacts remain significant across Anderson, Abbeville, and McCormick Counties. Supports maintaining current drought status, although previously favored keeping Anderson in severe drought.
- v. Scott H. - Hydrologic data supports maintaining moderate drought status for Anderson, Abbeville, and McCormick. Defers to agricultural impacts regarding Edgefield.
- vi. Yvonne K. - Significant rainfall variability across Aiken County. Edgefield conditions appear much drier, but support waiting for additional data before further changes.
- vii. Joe K. - Anderson County remains under Level 2 LIP restrictions. Supports maintaining current drought status until additional rainfall and data are available.
- viii. Motion: Move Edgefield County to severe drought status. Anderson, Abbeville, and McCormick remain in moderate drought status. All other counties remain at current drought status.
 - 1. Lynn McEwen, 1st
 - 2. Mark Williams, 2nd
- ix. Motion passes unanimously.

IV. Closing Remarks

- a. The next meeting date will be August 6th at 1:30 PM.
- b. Tyler (SCDNR) puts forth a motion to adjourn:
 - 1. Jason Thompson, 1st
 - 2. Joe Ghent, 2nd
- c. Meeting is adjourned at 11:39 AM.