

Drought Response Committee Conference Call

Date: August 6 , 2026

Time: 1:00 p.m.

A Drought Response Committee Conference Call was conducted at 1:00pm, August 6, 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 July 8th.
 - i.** Lynn McEwen, 1st
 - ii.** Casey Moorner, 2nd
 - iii.** Motion passes and the minutes have been approved

1. PowerPoint Presentation

- a.** Hope Mizzell begins with the presentation.
 - i. Current Drought Status** – As of the July 8 meeting, 36 counties were in severe drought and 10 counties were in moderate drought. Since then, rainfall has been highly variable, ranging from approximately 2.64” to over 15” across the state.
 - ii. July Rainfall** – Preliminary July totals remain highly variable. Charleston is experiencing its driest year on record, Columbia its fourth driest, and Greenville-Spartanburg its 12th driest.
 - iii. 30-, 60-, and 90-Day Rainfall** – Significant variability continues statewide, including within individual counties. The Coastal Plain and Pee Dee remain generally below normal, while portions of the Upstate and Piedmont have received normal to above-normal rainfall, with some areas near 150% of normal over 90 days.
 - vi. Crop Moisture Index** – Crop moisture conditions remain below normal from the Midlands through the Coastal Plain.

vii. Soil Moisture – Conditions have improved considerably compared to early July, although dryness persists in portions of the Pee Dee. Maps include both 0–40 cm and 0–100 cm soil depths.

viii. SPI – The 30-day SPI shows mostly incipient drought, with isolated severe conditions. The 60-day SPI ranges from incipient to extreme drought, particularly in the Pee Dee. The 90-day SPI is generally normal across the Upstate, with incipient to moderate drought primarily across the lower Midlands and Coastal Plain.

ix. US Drought Monitor – D0 and D1 conditions remain across portions of the Upstate, with D2 and D3 primarily across the Coastal Plain and Pee Dee.

viii. Rainfall Accumulations- Significant station-to-station variability continues within individual counties. Examples include Beaufort County, where 30-day totals ranged from approximately 2.6” to over 10”; Spartanburg County, ranging from just over 3” to 7.5” over 30 days and from less than 6” to approximately 17” over 60 days; and Charleston County, ranging from just over 2” to more than 14” over 30 days and from less than 5” to more than 20” over 60 days. County drought status will continue to consider the proportion of each county receiving normal to above-normal rainfall.

b. State Agency Reports

i. SCDES (Scott) – 14-day streamflow conditions have improved across much of the state following recent rainfall, with many gauges moving out of drought designation. Below normal to well below normal conditions persist in portions of the Pee Dee and Savannah Basin.

1. **Northeast DMA** – Black Creek, Lynches, and Waccamaw have responded to rainfall, although Lynches and Waccamaw remain below to well below normal.
2. **West DMA** – Chattooga remains below normal, while Stevens Creek is near normal. Twelve Mile Creek remains in moderate status near the 5th percentile. Coosawhatchie has responded to recent rainfall and is near the 12th percentile.
3. **Central DMA** – North Pacolet, Enoree, Rocky Creek, and Black River have responded to recent rainfall, although several remain below normal.
4. **Southern DMA** – North Fork, Sakahatchee, and Edisto show varying improvement but remain below normal.
5. **Lake Level** – Savannah Basin storage continues to decline slowly. Keowee-Toxaway and Catawba-Wateree remain in LIP Stage 2, and the USACE Savannah District remains in a Stage 2 drought

declaration. Blalock has improved to approximately 0.4 feet above its guide curve, while Murray and Marion remain approximately 1.4 feet below their guide curves. Santee Cooper has declared a short-term low inflow condition.

6. **Hartwell Reservoir Projection** – The latest available projection indicates a slight increase followed by a decline toward approximately 652 feet, near its current level.
7. **Groundwater** – Modest improvement is occurring in portions of the Savannah and Southern DMAs, while very dry conditions persist along the coast, in portions of the Pee Dee, and in parts of the Upstate.

a. Northeast DMA – Lancaster remains below normal but has shown some response to rainfall. Kershaw remains normal, while Lee County well 181 remains well below normal.

b. West DMA – Oconee remains below normal. Anderson and Aiken have improved to normal conditions, while Jasper remains below normal despite some response to rainfall.

c. Central DMA – Greenville remains well below normal. Saluda remains above normal following greater rainfall, while York remains below normal.

d. South DMA – Orangeburg has stabilized near normal. Charleston and Berkeley remain well below normal despite some response to rainfall.

ii. Joe Koon (SCDES) – Reported 50 water systems in voluntary conservation restrictions and 16 in mandatory conservation restrictions.

iii. Darryl Jones (SC Forestry Commission) – KBDI conditions have improved significantly, with most stations now below 500. July had 192 wildfires burning more than 1,500 acres, well above the 10-year average, including fires of 363 acres in Allendale County and 246 acres in Jasper County. Recent rainfall has reduced fire danger to near-normal levels, though conditions could worsen quickly with another dry period.

iv. SC Dept. of Agriculture (Sam Quinney) – Agricultural impacts remain significant in portions of the Pee Dee, northeastern Horry County, and Colleton County. Hay crops are suffering, while peanut crops are experiencing wilting and increased disease pressure from drought stress.

v. Hope Mizzell (SCDNR) – USDA Updates – USDA reports continue to show widespread and highly variable agricultural impacts. Recent rainfall has

provided short-term relief in some areas, but continued rainfall is needed for sustained improvement.

C. Short- and Long-term Forecast

i. **Seven-Day Tropical Outlook** – No tropical cyclone activity is expected during the next seven days.

ii. **Weekly QPF** – The August 6–13 forecast calls for less than 0.5” in some areas and approximately 0.5–1.5” elsewhere. Rainfall is expected to remain variable. Approximately 1” of rain per week is needed to offset evaporation losses.

iii. **6–10 Day Outlook** – Above-normal temperatures are favored for August 11–15, with a chance of above-normal precipitation but lower confidence in the precipitation forecast.

iv. **El Niño Outlook** – Developing El Niño conditions are expected to favor normal to above-normal precipitation during the fall and winter, potentially providing longer-term drought relief beginning as early as October.

v. **NWS (Josh Palmer)** – Recent rainfall has been highly localized, with some areas receiving significant amounts while others remain dry. Late July rainfall was enhanced by a stalled frontal boundary, tropical moisture from Bertha, and an upper-level low. The wetter pattern is expected to weaken, with warmer and drier conditions possible later next week. Tropical activity remains a wildcard, as even a weak system could produce significant rainfall.

vi. **Temperature and Precipitation Conditions (Hope Mizzell, SCDNR)**
Temperatures have remained consistently above normal, with Charleston experiencing its **6th-warmest summer on record** and other locations ranking in the top 10. Continued heat and insufficient rainfall remain concerns.

vii. **Drought Outlook** –The latest outlook indicates **drought removal is likely in some areas**, providing potential for continued improvement.

I. Open Discussion and Vote

Hope Mizzell (SCDNR)

a. West DMA

i. Brian C. – Beaufort and Jasper Counties can move down one drought level given recent rainfall.

ii. Scott W. – Supports a downgrade across much of the Upper Savannah River Basin, noting that failure to downgrade could affect public credibility. Conditions appear to be on the cusp of incipient to moderate.

iii. Lynn M. – Supports a downgrade for Barnwell and Aiken Counties, noting adequate rainfall across much of Barnwell County and the need to consider current indicators.

iv. Mark W. – Supports moving McCormick County down one drought level.

v. Scott W. – Supports downgrading the upper three counties and McCormick, with Abbeville likely moving down as well. Does not support moving below incipient due to continued LIP and lake level concerns and the need to remain consistent with Duke Energy and USACE conditions. Recent rainfall has been adequate enough for conditions to remain closer to normal than dry over the past 30–90 days.

vi. Scott H. – Cautions against relying heavily on forecasts for drought declarations. While recent rainfall has helped the Upstate recover from very dry conditions earlier in the year, there is not enough confidence in a longer-term change in the weather pattern.

vii. Sam Q. – Supports moving many northern counties down one level based on recent conditions. Expresses some concern for Allendale, Hampton, and Jasper due to continued dryness in the eastern portions of those counties, but notes that 30- and 60-day rainfall supports a one-level downgrade across the DMA.

viii. Proposed drought status: Oconee and Pickens to moderate; Anderson, Abbeville, and McCormick to incipient; Edgefield, Aiken, Barnwell, and Beaufort to moderate; Allendale, Hampton, and Jasper to remain in severe.

ix. Motion: Downgrade all counties in the West DMA as proposed, with Allendale, Hampton, and Jasper remaining in severe drought.

1. Scott Willet, 1st.

2. Lynn McEwen, 2nd.

x. Motion passes as presented.

b. Central DMA

i. Ken T. – Recent rainfall has improved conditions in portions of the DMA, particularly Greenville, Spartanburg, and Cherokee Counties, which could be downgraded from severe to moderate.

ii. Peggy S. – Fairfield County can be downgraded.

iii. Stuart A. – York County can be downgraded, with consideration also given to Chester County.

iv. Fred C. – Recent rainfall has improved streamflows, but conditions could decline quickly without additional rainfall. Catawba-Wateree remains under

LIP Stage 2, so recommends maintaining Chester County at its current status to avoid mixed messaging.

v. Scott H. – Streamflow conditions have improved across the Upper Central DMA, though additional rainfall is needed to maintain the improvement. Indicators could support some downgrades, but caution is warranted.

vi. Sam Q. – Supports downgrading Fairfield County based on recent rainfall.

vii. Gregory S. – Considered downgrading Fairfield, Richland, and Lexington Counties, but expressed uncertainty regarding longer-term conditions.

viii. Joe K. (DES) – Notes that Columbia remains approximately four inches below normal for July and approximately 10 inches below normal for January through July. Recent rainfall has improved conditions, but significant longer-term deficits remain, warranting caution with Richland and Lexington.

ix. Buddy R. – Reports highly variable rainfall across Sumter and Clarendon Counties, with some areas improving while others remain dry.

x. Sam Q. – Notes similarly variable rainfall across Sumter, Clarendon, Williamsburg, and Georgetown Counties. Recent rainfall has helped but is not sufficient to support downgrades in those areas.

xii. Motion: Downgrade Greenville, Spartanburg, Cherokee, York, Fairfield, and Chester Counties. Maintain Laurens, Newberry, Union, Greenwood, Saluda, Richland, and Lexington Counties at moderate status. Maintain Calhoun, Sumter, Clarendon, Williamsburg, and Georgetown Counties in severe drought.

1. Ken T., 1st.
2. Gregory S., 2nd.
 - xiii. Motion passes.

c. Southern DMA

i. Marion R. – Recommended keeping Colleton, Dorchester, and Bamberg in severe drought.

ii. Eric O. – Recent rainfall has provided needed improvement, particularly for the North Fork Edisto, but conditions have not improved enough to justify a change. Supports keeping the area in severe.

iii. Casey M. – Berkeley County has received substantial rainfall in some areas, but the northeastern portion remains very dry based on groundwater and streamflow conditions. Supports remaining in severe.

iv. Landrum W. – Agrees with the other members and supports maintaining the status quo.

v. Jason T. – Charleston County has received highly variable rainfall, with some areas receiving up to 14 inches and experiencing flooding while others received significantly less. Due to lagging reservoir, river, and groundwater conditions, supports remaining in severe for now. Noted that continued rainfall could warrant downgrading Charleston County at the next meeting.

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

1. Eric O., 1st
2. Casey M., 2nd

vii. Motion passes unanimously.

a. Northeast DMA

i. Athena S. – Conditions have improved across the DMA, and the recent rainfall and recovery of vegetation should be recognized. Supports moving Lancaster and Kershaw to moderate and is also open to downgrading Chesterfield, Darlington, Marlboro, and Dillon.

ii. Sam Q. – Notes substantial rainfall in Horry County but emphasizes that it remains under the highest U.S. Drought Monitor designation in portions of the county. Long-term and agricultural drought conditions remain significant, particularly in Dillon and Horry Counties, warranting caution with downgrades.

iii. Joe G. – Supports a one-level downgrade for Lancaster and Kershaw based on significant recent rainfall, with possible improvement in Chesterfield County.

iv. Athena S. – Recommends keeping Lee and Florence Counties in severe due to groundwater and streamflow concerns.

v. Motion: Move Lancaster, Kershaw, Chesterfield, Darlington, Marlboro, and Dillon Counties to moderate drought status. Maintain Lee, Florence, Marion, and Horry Counties in severe drought status.

1. Athena S., 1st.
 2. Joe G., 2nd.
- v. Motion passes.

I. Closing Remarks

- a. The next meeting date will be September 8th at 10:00 AM.
- b. Tyler (SCDNR) puts forth a motion to adjourn:

1. Jason Thompson, 1st
2. Joe Ghent, 2nd

- c. Meeting is adjourned at 2:41pm.