

## **Drought Response Committee Conference Call**

**Date: September 8, 2026**

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

A Drought Response Committee Conference Call was conducted at 10:00am, September 8, 2026. Notice of the date, time, and call-in information was posted and provided on the [scdrought.com](http://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 August 6<sup>th</sup>
  - i. Scott Willett, 1st
  - ii. Brad Powers, 2nd
  - iii. Motion passes and the minutes have been approved

### **II. PowerPoint Presentation**

- a. Hope Mizzell begins with the presentation.
  - i. **Current Drought Status** – As of the August 6 meeting, 18 counties were in severe drought, 25 in moderate, and 3 in incipient.
  - ii. **11-Month Ranking (September 2025 – July 2026) of Precipitation** – Based on the state-wide average, it has been the third driest in 131 years.
  - iii. **Preliminary Look at Summer Rainfall** – Charleston had the 10<sup>th</sup> driest summer on record, Columbia had the 7<sup>th</sup> driest, and Greenville/Spartanburg with the 29<sup>th</sup> driest.
  - iv. **Preliminary Look at Summer Temperatures** – The drought has played a significant role in the drought over this summer. Observed Mean Temperatures from June 1<sup>st</sup> to August 31<sup>st</sup> show Walterboro having the warmest average temperature on record in 81 years, Charleston, the third warmest in 97 years, Columbia the 6<sup>th</sup> warmest in 79 years and Saluda tying at 8 in 99 years. Noted observations are

based on stations that were in the top 10 warmest but had over 50 years of record.

- v. **August 2026 Temperatures—Average Maximum**—Average maximum temperatures throughout August were above normal throughout the state.
- vi. **Preliminary Look at August Rainfall** – Preliminary August totals remained mostly below normal with a couple receiving normal or slightly above normal rainfall including Florence and Greenville/Spartanburg. Charleston ranked 35<sup>th</sup> driest and Columbia 26<sup>th</sup> driest. Greenville/Spartanburg, however, ranked the 21<sup>st</sup> wettest.
- vii. **7-Day Rainfall (8/31/26-9/6/26)** – Rainfall was highly variable with some areas, especially in the midlands, receiving heavy rainfall, and other areas receiving little to no rainfall.
- viii. **30-, 60-, and 90-Day Rainfall** – Beaufort and Charleston received a significant amount of rainfall within the 30-day period. While Anderson, McCormick and other upper Savannah River Basin counties are experiencing very little to no rainfall (10-30%). Some upstate counties, as well as parts of the Pee Dee and some coastal counties received above normal rainfall over the 60-day period. Some counties in the upstate and Pee Dee received above normal rainfall throughout the 90-day period, while the rest of the state remains below.
- ix. **Clemson Tempest Station Data** – Some stations in Horry County over to the Pee Dee showed rainfall of four to six inches August 7<sup>th</sup> through September 3<sup>rd</sup>. Other tempest stations in the upstate only showed two to three inches of rainfall during the same period.
- x. **Soil Moisture** – Soil moisture has decreased throughout the state.
- xi. **Standard Precipitation Index (SPI)** – The 30-day index shows stations across the upstate as normal with a few incipient, and two severe indexes in Lexington and Anderson counties. The 60- and 90-day SPI ranges throughout the state, showing some improvement in the northwestern areas, especially going into the 90-day period.
- xii. **U.S. Drought Monitor** – The U.S. Drought monitor shows some improvement in coastal counties. However, a moderate level has come back in some counties like Anderson.
- xiii. **Rainfall Accumulations** – Significant station-to-station variability continues within individual counties. Examples include Aiken County, with one station ranging from 5” to 11” of rain across 60 days;

Spartanburg County's rainfall ranged from 3" to 10" across 30 days and 7" to around 19" across 60 days; Charleston County received rainfall ranging from around 6" to 26" over 60 days; and Horry County received rainfall from around 7" to above 18" across 60 days.

**b. State Agency Reports**

i. **SCDES (Scott Harder)** – 14-day streamflow conditions show no dramatic changes. The upstate area shows drier conditions and along the coastal plain continue with below normal conditions. Only two gauges show indications of drought with Twelve mile Creek in the Upper Savannah Basin being extreme and the Lynches River in the Pee Dee Basin being moderate. 14-day status shows drier conditions than the regulatory method.

1. **Northeast DMA** – Black Creek and Waccamaw remain on the drier side but generally improved conditions from earlier in the summer. The Lynches River, however, has been drier with the 14-day average at a 4<sup>th</sup> percentile flow.
2. **West DMA** – Rocky River and Motier Creek on the drier side but not enough to trigger drought status according to the regulatory method. Twelve mile Creek continues to be dry, with the 14-day average at a 4<sup>th</sup> percentile flow. Coosawhatchie is dry and has been for most of the summer.
3. **Central DMA** – Conditions for all rivers on the drier side, however, generally improved from the summer.
4. **Southern DMA** – Conditions still on the drier side but not enough to trigger drought status accounting to the regulatory methods.
5. **Lake Level** – Savannah Basin continues to decline. Keowee-Toxaway is still in LIP Stage 2, and USACE Savannah District remains in a Stage 2 drought. Blalock and Greenwood lakes doing well, which Murray and Marion continue to steadily decline blew 1.5 ft. Wylie remains low; however, Wateree is still at its target level.
6. **Hartwell Reservoir Projection** – The USACE is projecting the lake levels to continue to decrease over the next couple of months.
7. **Groundwater** – Not much change in groundwater since August 8<sup>th</sup>. Drier conditions in upstate and the Pee Dee compared to

August, except the small pocket in the central-west part of the state.

- a. **Northeast DMA** – Lancaster County below normal conditions, Kershaw approaching below normal conditions, Lee much below normal water levels.
  - b. **West DMA** – Oconee and Anderson Counties both in below normal conditions. Aiken, however, is at a normal status, doing better than most of the sites in this area. Jasper remains well below normal conditions.
  - c. **Central DMA** – Greenville County remains in very low water levels. Saluda is showing above normal status due to more rainfall recently. York remains in a normal status with declining levels.
  - d. **South DMA** – Berkley and Charleston continue to be low. Orangeburg is in normal status but slowly declining into below normal status.
8. Overall, without any tropical events, hydraulic conditions are not expected to improve until the winter.

ii. **Duke Energy (Andrew Sholl)**

1. **Catawba- Wateree LIP Summary**—Catawba-Wateree Project remains in stage two of the LIP low inflow protocol. Current conditions have recovered; however, the six-month average streamflow has lagged over the past several months.
2. **Keowee- Toxaway LIP Summary**—The four-month long-term average streamflow has improved; however, the reservoir storage remains low.
3. **Lake Keowee**—Lake Keowee remains about 4.5 feet below full pond.
4. **Lake Jocassee**—Lake Jocassee has recovered slightly from weeks before but remains a couple of feet below full pond.

iii. **SC Forestry Commission (Darryl Jones)**

1. **SCFC KBDI values of 9/3/26**—KBDI values are expected to improve with rain. However, prior to the meeting, many stations still reflected the moderate to severe drought conditions with minimal rainfall. The humidity has kept the wildfire curves from being too severe, though they remain above average for August.

Percentage of wildfires remains about 50% above where the five-year average should be (five-year average is 36 wildfires and we had 56). Number of acres burned has been higher due to the drought, but the humidity has kept them from being large fires (average acres burned for five years is 143 and we were at 432 acres burned). As we approach a drier season during September and October, there should be no concern if we receive enough rain to have some moisture on the ground. However, concerns may rise as plants begin to die off and coincide with dry weather and frontal passages that bring dry air and less humidity with higher winds.

**iv. SC Dept. of Agriculture (Erin Doll)**—Continued reports of dryness around the state especially in lower Anderson County, Abbeville and McCormick area.

**v. USDA Updates (Hope Mizzell, SCDNR)**

1. USDA reports continue to show widespread and highly variable agricultural impacts. Recent rainfall has provided short-term relief in some areas, but not enough for consistent benefit for crops.
2. NDMC condition monitoring observer reports and CoCoRaHS. Calhoun county reports they have not seen this much of their spillway in years.

**vi. Department of Environmental Services (Leigh Monroe)**—Currently, there are 18 water supply systems with mandatory restrictions and 51 with voluntary restrictions. There are no new reports of issues with wells going dry.

**c. Short and Long-term Forecast**

- i. **Seven-Day Tropical Outlook**—Tropics showing a slow and quiet hurricane season so far and no activity is expected during the next seven days
- ii. **7-day precipitation forecast**—Seven-day forecast is generally dry, below normal precipitation across the state, except coastal areas expected to get 1-1.25” of rain.

- iii. **6-10 Day Outlook**—6-10-day outlook shows a higher likelihood for above normal temperatures and a lower scale for the precipitation forecast, showing near normal conditions.
- iv. **3-Month Outlook**— According to CPC, there is a higher likelihood that we would see above normal precipitation.
- v. **Drought Outlook**— The drought remains but improves. Based on the outlook, drought removal in coastal areas is likely.

d. **National Weather Service (Josh Palmer)** –The likelihood of drier conditions through the rest of the month is higher. The chance of above normal rainfall in the CPC outlook is due to the mean presence of frontal boundaries across the southeast which may help to focus precipitation. The signal for above-normal rainfall through the rest of the month does not look likely. There will still be some time before more beneficial rainfall will occur to help conditions improve.

### III. **Open Discussion and Vote**

Hope Mizzell (SCDNR)

#### a. **Northeast DMA**

- i. Joe G. – Not much improvement in the upper end to make any changes; Lexington County and surrounding counties need to stay in incipient. Lancaster, Kershaw and Chesterfield counties should stay where they are at.
- ii. Athena S. – Recommends Florence County downgrading to moderate, and Marlboro, Dillon and Darlington downgraded to incipient.
- iii. Alan W. – The northern part of Lee County has experienced very little rainfall while the southern part has had more rainfall; supports not downgrading Lee County.
- iv. Scott H. – Supports downgrading Florence to moderate and maintain Lee at severe level.
- v. Lindsay P. – Darlington and Florence counties experiencing sporadic but heavy rainfall throughout with slight improvements, supporting improvement in these counties
- vi. Darryl J. – Supports maintaining Marion and Horry in severe and downgrading the other three counties and maintain the rest where they are at. Agrees there is concern with coast being dry with the

threat of peat fires, however, there has been some improvement in surrounding counties.

- vii. Athena S. – Recommends downgrading Chesterfield County to incipient based on surrounding counties.
- viii. Joe G. – Agrees if the indicators show there is improvement, then Chesterfield County could have support to be downgraded.
- ix. Athena – Ultimately decides to maintain Chesterfield County in current incipient condition.
  
- x. **Motion:** Move Marlboro, Dillon, and Darlington counties to incipient, and move Florence to moderate drought status.
  - 1. Athena Strickland, 1<sup>st</sup>.
  - 2. Alan Watkins, 2<sup>nd</sup>.
    - a. Motion passes.

**b. Central DMA**

- i. John I. – Laurens County experiencing scattered rains; suggests maintaining moderate drought. Newberry, Saluda and Greenwood counties also look very dry. Hay yield is down, and soybean crops look rough because of the drought. Recommends maintaining moderate drought status in said counties.
- ii. Peggy S. – Fairfield has also experienced scattered rain, however, there have been no improvements because of the heat. Suggests maintaining Fairfield County at moderate drought status.
- iii. Ken T. – Spartanburg County received a good share of rain. Could go either way of downgrading northern counties to incipient or maintaining them as moderate. Supports downgrading Spartanburg County to incipient based on water supply in lakes.
- iv. Brad P. – Greenville County received a good share of rain, minus the southern parts, but has overall improved and suggests downgrading the county to incipient status. Agrees that Laurens County is dry and should be maintained at moderate drought status.
- v. Fred C. III – Despite large rainfall events in Chester County, there are long periods of time without any rain. Recommends that Chester County remains in moderate status.
- vi. Ken T. – Supports Greenville, Spartanburg, Cherokee and Union counties downgrading to incipient drought level.

- vii. Darryl J. – Recommends maintaining lower counties in severe drought status.
- viii. Scott H. – Agrees with Darryl’s recommendation of maintaining the severe status for the lower counties.

ix. **Motion:** Move Greenville, Spartanburg, Cherokee and Union counties to incipient drought status,

- 1. Peggy Swearington, 1<sup>st</sup>.
- 2. Ken Tuck, 2<sup>nd</sup>.
  - a. Motion passes

**c. Southern DMA**

- i. Landrum W.– Suggests maintaining the southern DMA counties in severe drought status as there have not been any recent improvements.
- ii. Jason T. – Based on the Palmer Drought Index, Crop Moisture Index 30-, 60-, and 90-day SPIs, the US Drought Index and the KBDI all indicate Charleston County has received some relief. Supports moving Charleston into moderate drought status.
- iii. Casey M. – Agrees with Landrum that there has been no improvement across DMA. Would not object to Jason’s suggestion of downgrading Charleston County to moderate drought status.
- iv. Eric O. – Agrees with group of downgrading Charleston to moderate status and maintaining severe status throughout the rest of the southern DMA as he has not seen much improvement in Orangeburg County.
- v. Marion R. – Agrees with group.
- vi. **Motion:** Move Charleston County to moderate drought status. Rest of the DMA stays the same.
  - 1. Eric Odom, 1<sup>st</sup>.
  - 2. Marion Rizer, 2<sup>nd</sup>.
    - a. Motion passes.

#### **d. West DMA**

- i.** Scott W. – Parts of Anderson County look exceptionally dry while other parts are similar to Greenville and have received scattered but intense rain. Suggests that the upper region of the DMA should opt to unify in moderate drought status, moving Anderson, Abbeville and McCormick from incipient to moderate). Argues that hydrologically, this region is too dry to stay in incipient.
- ii.** Mark W. – Agrees with Scott and adds that lake levels continue to decrease, which is inconsistent to what they are seeing everywhere else.
- iii.** Lynn M. – Recommends that the southern area of West DMA should stay where they are.
- iv.** Yvonne K. – Parts of Aiken County had received much needed rainfall; however, the western side of the county has not received much rain. Pastures remain dry. Barnwell County received some rain; however, it is still very dry. Beaufort has also received some rain, but not enough for improvement. Supports leaving the southern counties where they are and upgrading Abbeville, McCormick and Anderson counties.
- v.** Brian C. – Supports Beaufort County remaining moderate; however, suggests downgrading Jasper county to moderate due to the influx in rainfall.
- vi.** Rick G. – Agrees in change of status of Abbeville and McCormick counties to be upgraded to moderate drought status.
- vii.** David E. – Questions the change in Jasper based on rainfall due to Hampton and Allendale receiving similar amounts.
- viii.** Marion R. – Argues that Hampton and Allendale still very dry, mentioning parts of the counties still being severe status based on the U.S. Drought Monitor.
- ix.** Hope M. – Directs back to the U.S. Drought Monitor which shows a range of intensities throughout Jasper County (D0-D3)
- x.** Yvonne K. – Based on the 30- and 60-day rainfall for Hampton, Jasper and Allendale counties; Jasper is similar to Aiken in that the rainfall is highly variable throughout the county and suggests that Jasper, Hampton and Allendale counties should maintain their status.
- xi.** Brian C. – Supports his suggestion to downgrade Jasper County based on the KBDI being in the low 400s, as well as the 30-Day SPI being

incipient. Due to the range in data, it is a difficult decision and could go either way. Agrees to leave Jasper in severe status.

**xii. Motion:** Move Abbeville, Anderson, and McCormick counties from incipient to moderate drought status. The rest of the DMA remains the same.

1. Scott Willett, 1<sup>st</sup>.
2. Mark Warner, 2<sup>nd</sup>.
  - a. Motion passes.

**IV. Closing Remarks**

- a. The next meeting date will be Tuesday, October 13<sup>th</sup> at 10:00am
- b. Tyler (SCDNR) puts forth a motion to adjourn:
  - i. Casey Moorer, 1st
  - ii. Yvonne Kling, 2nd
- c. Meeting is adjourned at 11:40 a.m.