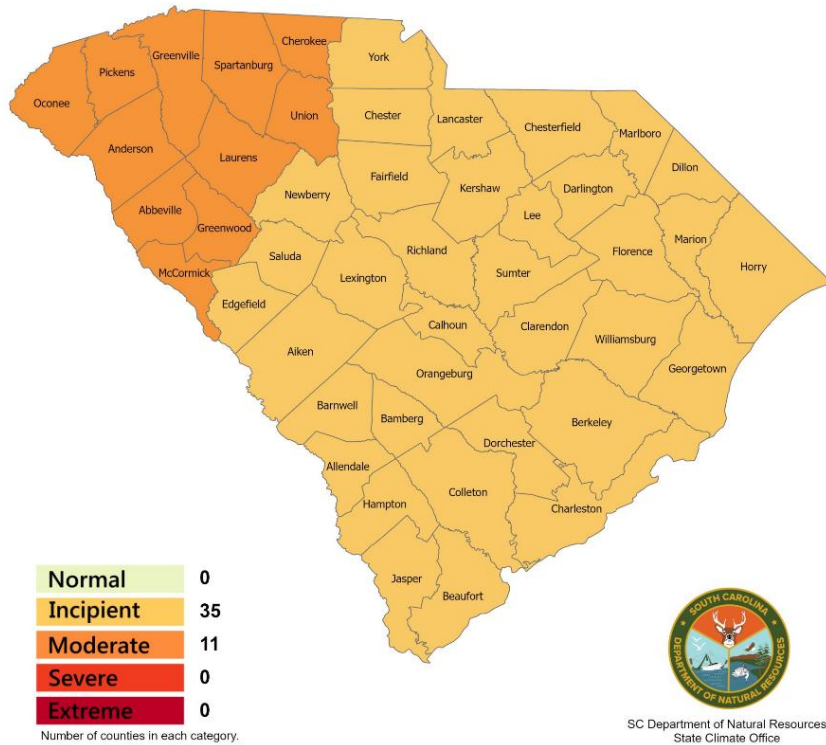


# Drought Conditions Intensify for Some Counties

March 5, 2026



The South Carolina Drought Response Committee (DRC) met on March 5, 2026, to evaluate drought conditions statewide. The DRC is the state’s major drought decision-making entity and determines drought severity as defined by the S.C. Drought Response Act to protect the state’s natural resources. The act establishes four levels of drought: incipient, moderate, severe, and extreme. For more information about the DRC and the SC Drought Response Program, visit [scdrought.com](http://scdrought.com).

Below normal rainfall and declining streamflow and lake levels were the key factors guiding the Committee’s decision to upgrade eleven counties (Abbeville, Anderson, Cherokee, Greenville, Greenwood, Laurens, McCormick, Oconee, Pickens, Spartanburg, and Union) to moderate drought. The incipient drought designation was maintained for all other counties.

According to the SC State Climatology Office, the statewide precipitation for November through January ranked as the third driest out of 131 years of record. Eight counties experienced the driest November through January on record. Rainfall during February increased but was not enough to overcome the rainfall deficit.

### Precipitation Summary for Select Stations: November 2025 through February 2026\*

Station	2025-2026 Rainfall (inches)	Mean Rainfall	Percent of Normal Rainfall
Anderson Regional Ap	7.77	15.99	49%
Greenville-Spartanburg AP	7.59	16.38	46%
Laurens	7.05	16.18	44%
Oconee	8.04	20.55	40%

\*Preliminary data for February

The S.C. Department of Environmental Services reported that streamflow conditions in the upper half of the Western and Central Drought Management Areas remain well below normal with 14-day average percentiles at some sites below their 10<sup>th</sup> percentile flows and reservoir levels remain well below their target levels in the Savannah basin.

Groundwater levels at several sites in the upper portions of these drought management areas also remain below normal with little to no sign of winter recharge typical for this time of year. The current hydrologic conditions supported the moderate drought declaration for the counties in the upper regions of these drought management areas.

Hydrologic conditions in other parts of the state have generally not worsened over the past month with some portions of the Central, Southern, and Northeast Drought Management Areas experiencing some improvement. However, the current hydrologic conditions still support maintaining the incipient drought declaration for the rest of the counties in the state.

Winter rainfall is critical for recharging water resources. Due to much lower evaporation rates during the winter, more rainfall infiltrates into the ground. This allows for recharging our surficial aquifers and leads to typically higher baseflow levels for streams. Groundwater recharge in the winter is important to help sustain aquifer and stream baseflow levels later in the spring and summer, especially during drier periods.

According to the South Carolina Forestry Commission, February rainfall was enough to keep wildfire numbers below the state's five-year average. However, they emphasized that as we move into March, wildfire activity is expected to increase.

This time of year, the fine fuels where most wildfires start—all the grasses and leaves that grew last summer—are dormant and can dry out quickly after just a few days of warm, dry weather. After several days of drying, it becomes much easier for fires to start and spread.

The South Carolina Forestry Commission recommends that anyone conducting outdoor burning take extra precautions. Be sure to notify the Forestry Commission before

burning, establish a firebreak around your fire, have the proper tools or water available to control the fire if it escapes, and remain with the fire until it is completely safe.

The Drought Response Committee will reconvene on April 9, 2026

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<b>Committee Members</b>	<b>Group</b>	<b>Attendance 03/05/2026</b>
<b>West DMA</b>		
Reg Williams	Agriculture	
Cheryl Daniels	Commission of Public Works	
Mark Warner	Counties	<b>X</b>
-	Domestic User	VACANT
David Evans	Industry	<b>X</b>
Lynn McEwen	Municipalities	<b>X</b>
Preston Pierce	Power Generation Facilities	
J. Scott Willett	Private Water Supplier	
Chris Rasco	Public Service District	
Rick Green	Regional Council of Gov.	<b>X</b>
Yvonne Kling	Soil and Water Conservation Dist.	<b>X</b>
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	<b>X</b>

Christy Jones	Domestic User	
Ed Holder	Industry	
James G. Bagley	Municipalities	<b>X</b>
Alan Stuart	Power Generation Facilities	<b>X</b>
Brad C. Powers	Private Water Supplier	
-	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	<b>X</b>
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	<b>X</b>
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	
Jason Thompson	Commission of Public Works	<b>X</b>
-	Counties	VACANT
Chris Wallace	Domestic User	
-	Industry	VACANT
Eric Odom	Municipalities	<b>X</b>
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>Other Participants</b>		
Hope Mizzell	SCDNR, LWC Division	<b>X</b>
Melissa Griffin	SCDNR, LWC Division	<b>X</b>
Jennifer Simmons	SCDNR, LWC Division	<b>X</b>
Frank Strait	SCDNR, LWC Division	<b>X</b>
Joshua Palmer	NWS GSP	<b>X</b>
Tyler Brown	SCDNR	<b>X</b>
Sarah Coleman	USDA FSA	<b>X</b>
Valerie Jackson	SCFB	<b>X</b>
Leigh Monroe	SC DES	<b>X</b>
Scott Harder	SC DES	<b>X</b>
Alexis Modzelesky	SC DES	<b>X</b>
Rebecca Morris	SC DES	<b>X</b>
Elliot Wickham	NOAA/NIDIS	<b>X</b>
Gregory Sprouse		<b>X</b>
Glen Thomas	USDA FSA	<b>X</b>