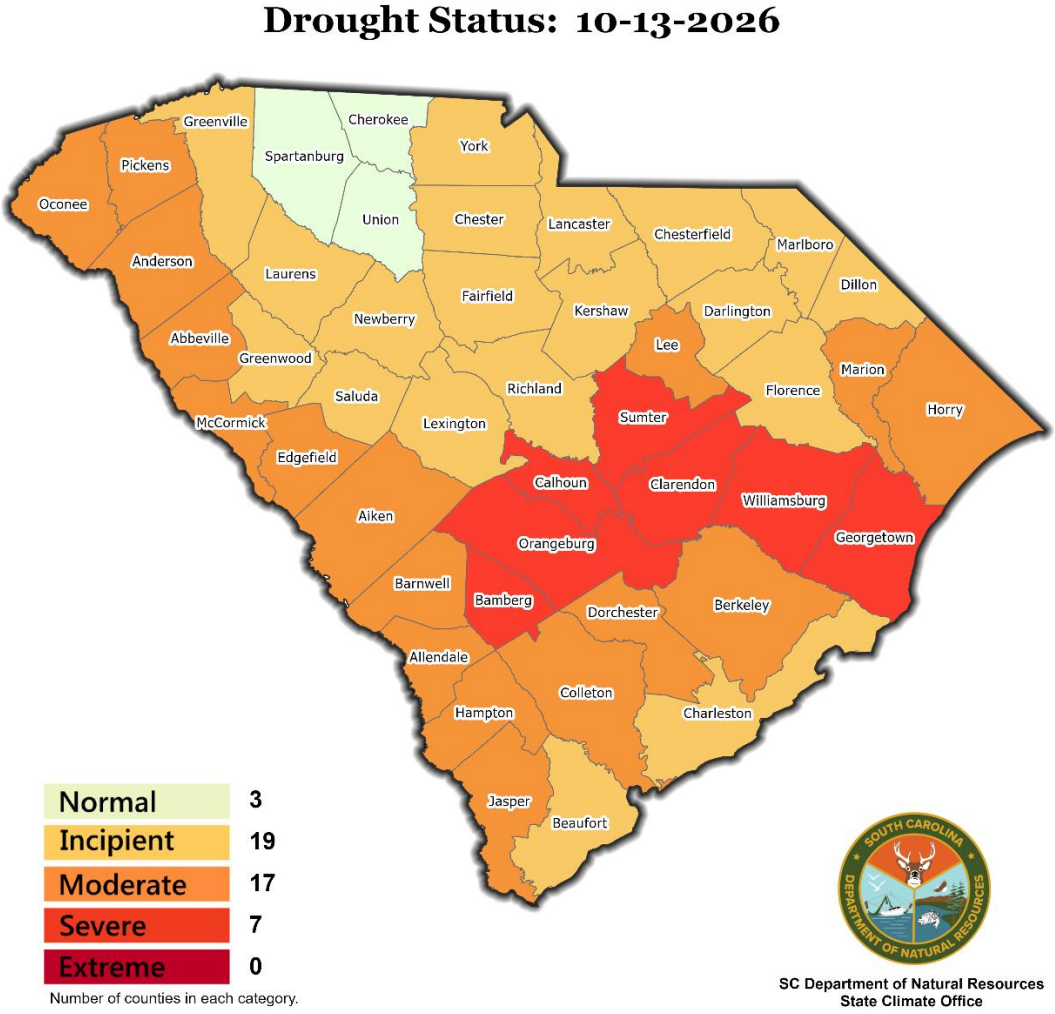
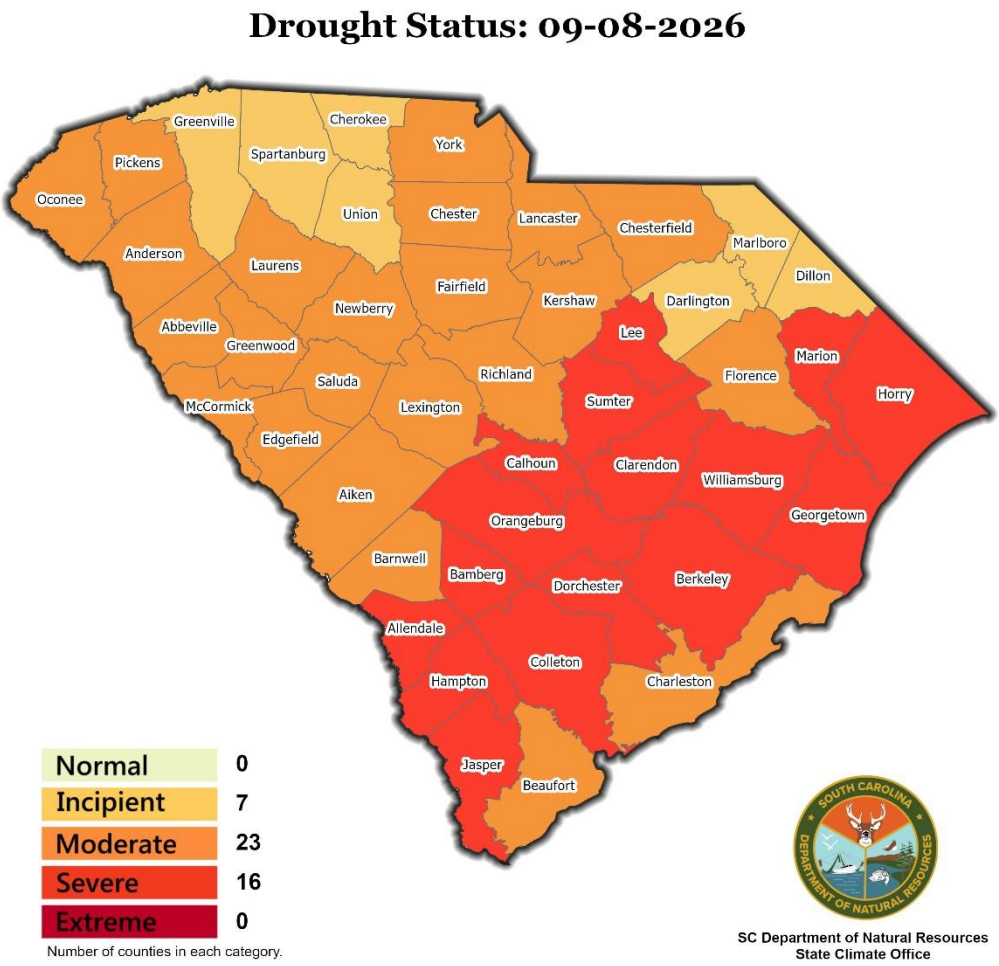
South Carolina's Drought Conditions Improve



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: OCTOBER 15, 2026

COLUMBIA, S.C. -- The South Carolina Drought Response Committee (DRC) met on October 13, 2026, to evaluate drought conditions across the state. The DRC is the state's primary drought decision-making body, responsible for determining drought severity in accordance with the S.C. Drought Response Act to help protect the state's natural resources. The Act establishes four drought levels: incipient, moderate, severe, and extreme. For more information about the DRC and the South Carolina Drought Response Program, visit scdrought.com.

After reviewing drought indicators statewide, the DRC voted to reduce drought severity in 27 counties. The maps attached illustrate changes in drought status between the DRC's September 8 and October 13, 2026, meetings.



According to the South Carolina State Climatology Office, this is the most significant improvement in drought conditions since the drought began in early fall 2025. Recent rainfall, combined with cooler temperatures and lower evapotranspiration, has improved soil moisture for agriculture and pastures, increased streamflows, and reduced both the number of wildfires and the acreage burned.

Despite these improvements, some areas of the state continue to miss out on beneficial rainfall. Seven counties remain in Severe Drought Status, while three counties are no longer experiencing drought conditions.

Over the 30-day period ending October 13, precipitation ranged from 1.91 inches at Hopkins 3.9 NNE to 12.97 inches in Walterboro.

Highest and Lowest 30-Day Precipitation Totals and Departure from Normal Values
Ending October 13, 2026

Station	30-Day Total	30-Day Departure from Normal	Station	30-Day Total	30-Day Departure from Normal
Walterboro 1 SW	12.97”	+8.56”	Kingstree 7.9 NW	2.15”	-3.67”
Newberry	9.69”	+5.68”	Mullins	2.29”	-3.53
Charleston 0.3 ESE	10.07”	+5.45”	Hopkins 3.9 NNE	1.91”	-3.11
Greenwood 8 NE	8.53”	+4.48”	Lexington 2.9 NE	1.76”	-3.09
Ninety-Nine Island	7.88”	+4.24”	Florence Reg. Ap	1.78”	-2.48
Spartanburg 3.9ENE	9.53”	+3.20”	Salley 4.9 NNE	2.01”	-2.22

The South Carolina Department of Environmental Services (SCDES) provided an overview of hydrologic conditions across the state. Rainfall associated with Hurricane Isaias over the weekend supported the reduction in drought severity across many counties, particularly in central South Carolina and the Piedmont, as well as the Lowcountry, including Jasper, Beaufort, and Charleston counties. The rainfall also improved 14-day average streamflows, particularly in Union, Spartanburg, and Cherokee counties. Groundwater levels remained similar to those reported last month.

Significant increases in streamflow were recorded at several monitoring sites between the September 8 and October 13 Drought Response Committee meetings. At the North Pacolet River near Fingerville, streamflow increased from 55 to 2,250 cubic feet per second (cfs). At the Congaree River at Columbia, streamflow rose from 2,200 to 32,000 cfs. Although streamflows at these sites have declined from their recent peaks, they remain at more typical levels, representing an improvement over conditions observed in recent months.

Despite these improvements, some streams continue to experience below-normal flows that are trending downward in the absence of widespread, beneficial rainfall. In Williamsburg County, streamflow on the Black River at Kingstree decreased from 52 to 19 cfs between the two reporting periods.

Reservoir levels remain below normal in the Savannah River Basin, although modest improvements were observed at several other major lakes. Due to persistently low reservoir levels in the Savannah River Basin, the West Drought Response Committee maintained Moderate Drought Status for counties in the basin. Lake Jocassee is 14.70 feet below its guide curve for this time of year, while Lake Hartwell is 10.57 feet below its guide curve.

According to the South Carolina Forestry Commission, wildfire occurrences began to fall below average during September and into early October. Higher humidity has helped reduce fire activity, even as drought conditions persist. However, as the state enters its typically drier fall season, falling leaves and dormant vegetation may contribute to conditions more favorable for increased wildfire activity.

Residents are encouraged to exercise caution when conducting outdoor burning and to follow all applicable laws and regulations.

The S.C. Drought Response Committee will continue to closely monitor conditions and reconvene on December 3, 2026.

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Committee Members	Group	Attendance 10/13/2026
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	
Preston Pierce	Power Generation Facilities	
J. Scott Willett	Private Water Supplier	

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	**x**
Christy Jones	Domestic User	**x**
Ed Holder	Industry	
James G. Bagley	Municipalities	
Alan Stuart	Power Generation Facilities	**x**
Brad C. Powers	Private Water Supplier	
-	Public Service District	VACANT
Gregory Sprouse	Regional Council of Gov.	
John T. Rivers	Soil and Water Conservation Dist.	
Fred Castles	Special Purpose District	
Northeast DMA		
Caleb Miller	Agriculture	
-	Commission of Public Works	VACANT
Karolan Ohanesian	Domestic User	**x**
Athena Strickland	Industry	**x**
Clint Elliott	Municipality	**x**
-	Power Generation Facilities	VACANT
-	Private Water Supplier	VACANT
Alan Watkins	Counties	
Elbert Warren	Public Service District	**x**
Lindsay Privette	Regional Council of Gov.	
Joe Ghent	Soil and Water Conservation Dist.	**x**
Nathan Ward	Special Purpose District	**x**
Southern DMA		
Landrum Weathers	Agriculture	**x**
Jason Thompson	Commission of Public Works	**x**

-	Counties	VACANT
Russell Cornette	Domestic User	**x**
-	Industry	VACANT
Eric Odom	Municipalities	**x**
Casey Moorer	Power Generation Facilities	**x**
-	Private Water Supplier	VACANT
-	Public Service District	VACANT
Ronald E. Mitchum	Regional Council of Gov.	
Marion L. Rizer	Soil and Water Conservation Dist.	**x**
-	Special Purpose District	VACANT
State Agency Members		
Tyler Brown	SCDNR, LWC Division	**x**
Jordan Van Delden	SC Emergency Management Divis.	**x**
Joe Koon	SC Dept. of Environ. Services	
Stephen Polk	SC Forestry Commission	**x**
Michael Kule	SC Department of Agriculture	**x**
Hope Mizzell	SCDNR, LWC Division	**x**
Melissa Griffin	SCDNR, LWC Division	**x**
Jennifer Simmons	SCDNR, LWC Division	**x**
Amanda DiFalco	SCDNR, LWC Division	**x**
Ella Davenport	SCDNR, LWC Division	**x**
Alexis Modezelsky	Department of Environmental Services	**x**
Shelby S.	Southeast River Forecast Center	**x**
Andrea Kelley	The Journal in Seneca	**x**
Casey Price	Saluda RBC	**x**
Gabriel E Irigaray	Dominion Energy	**x**
Carl L. McDurmon	Department of Environmental Services	**x**
KC Price	LCWSC	**x**
Glenn Thomas	USDA	**x**
Leigh Monroe	Department of Environmental Services	**x**
Robert Clark	SCDNR	**x**