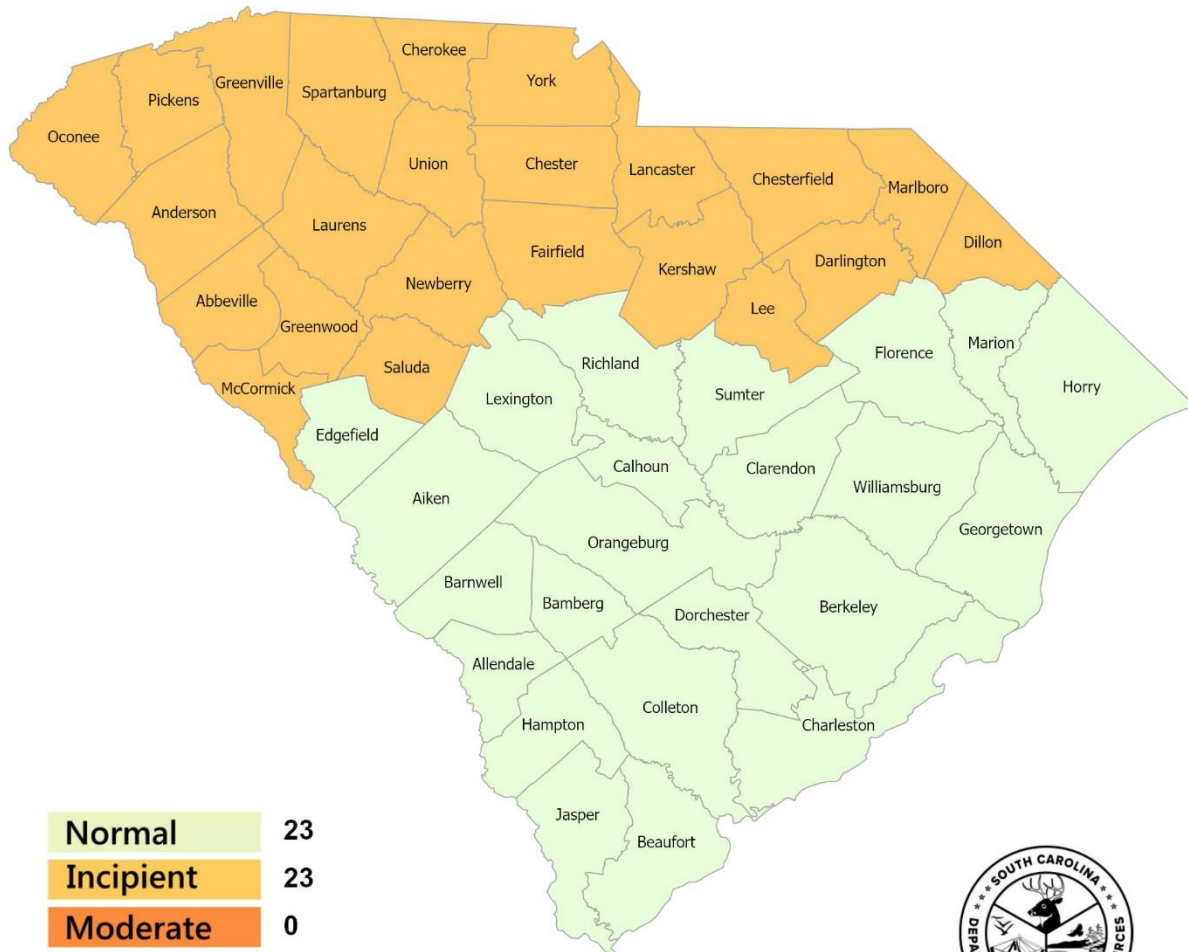


SC Drought Response Committee reports mild drought throughout northern counties

Drought Status: 10-17-2023



Normal	23
Incipient	23
Moderate	0
Severe	0
Extreme	0

Number of counties in each category.



SC Department of Natural Resources
State Climate Office

Oct. 17, 2023

Much of the northern part of South Carolina is experiencing mild drought conditions, while the rest of the state is receiving adequate rainfall, the state committee tasked with monitoring those conditions reported Tuesday.

The S.C. Drought Response Committee upgraded the drought status of 23 counties (see map) to incipient, the lowest-level of drought conditions.

As designated by state law, incipient is the first level of drought followed by moderate, severe and extreme. Low streamflow conditions, forest fire concerns and below normal topsoil and subsoil moisture were the primary driving factors of the drought declaration. The state was last under a drought designation in February 2023, said State Climatologist Hope Mizell, whose office is within the S.C. Department of Natural Resources (SCDNR).

The state made it through spring and summer with adequate rainfall and received too much rain in some areas from Tropical System Idelia in late August, but the rainfall diminished significantly during September and October. Thirty-day rainfall totals in the counties upgraded to incipient drought generally ranged from 1.5 to 2.5 inches.

Some of the lowest reported 30-day rainfall totals by the Community Collaborative Rain, Hail and Snow Network, a network of volunteer weather observers, are included in the table below.

30-Day CoCoRaHS Rainfall Total Ending Oct. 16, 2023					
Station	County	Total (in)	Station	County	Total (in)
Blair 6.3 ESE	Fairfield	1.29	Hodges 5.5 NE	Greenwood	1.98
Lockhart 5.4 N	Cherokee	1.43	Rock Hill 5.8 WNW	York	1.68
Lyman 4.1 WNW	Spartanburg	1.43	Williamston 5.4 W	Anderson	1.71
Greenville 5.4 WNW	Greenville	1.44	Hartsville 3.6 WSW	Darlington	1.77
Lancaster 0.4 WSW	Lancaster	1.47	Union 2.3 NNE	Union	1.85
Clemson 0.8 NE	Pickens	1.56	Iva 6.4 WWS	Abbeville	1.94
Seneca 8.9 N	Oconee	1.66			

The U.S. Drought Monitor was one of the drought indicators supporting the upgrade. Elliot Wickham, water resources climatologist for the State Climate Office, explained that the current U.S. Drought Monitor map has all Upstate and Piedmont counties in either abnormally dry or moderate drought, even after the recent rain.

“We are beginning to see an increase in wildfire activity due to drying conditions caused by the lack of rainfall,” said Stephen Patterson, training and safety manager for the S.C. Forestry Commission,. “As of Oct. 16, we have already seen 70 percent of the number of wildfires that we would expect to see for the entire month. Where drought conditions are in place, fires are easier to ignite and usually take more resources to suppress. With the current dry conditions, especially in the Upstate, and no significant rainfall in sight, we want to urge those who are going to be doing any type of outdoor burning to be responsible and take the necessary precautions.”

The hydrologic conditions show that the lack of beneficial rain for the past couple of months in the Upstate and northern Pee Dee counties has resulted in a gradual decline in streamflows, reservoir levels and groundwater levels, according to Priyanka More, hydrologist with SCDNR. For instance, the streamflow in the North Pacolet River at Fingerville in Spartanburg County has only 8 percent of its normal flow for this time of year. Black Creek near McBee in Chesterfield County is experiencing only 3 percent of its normal flow. Low streamflow and lake levels have resulted in the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Savannah District activating its drought management plan to conserve water in their reservoirs by reducing the outflows. The Keowee-Toxaway River Basin has also activated its low inflow protocol.

The dry conditions have negatively impacted agriculture as well. Representatives for many of the counties designated in drought noted that pastures were dry, causing some producers to feed hay to their livestock. While producers were thankful for the rain last week, it was not enough to improve pasture conditions. In the upper Pee Dee Region, the dry conditions have caused the soil to harden, making it difficult for peanuts to break through the ground. Crop impacts have not been limited to peanuts, as the dry conditions have also negatively affected cotton and soybean production in some areas.

The Drought Response Committee will continue to monitor conditions and expects to reconvene in late November.

Media Contacts:

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Committee Members	Group	Attendance 10/17/2023
West DMA		
Reg Williams	Agriculture	
David Evans	Industry	
Preston Pierce	Power Generation Facilities	
J. Scott Willett	Private Water Supplier	X
Chris Rasco	Public Service District	X
Yvonne Kling	Soil and Water Conservation Dist.	X
Brian Chemsak	Special Purpose District	X
Central DMA		
John Irwin	Agriculture	
Ken Tuck	Commission of Public Works	X
Peggy Swearingen	Counties	X
Christy Jones	Domestic User	X
Ed Holder	Industry	X
James G. Bagley	Municipalities	X
Alan Stuart	Power Generation Facilities	X
Brad C. Powers	Private Water Supplier	X
Gregory Sprouse	Regional Council of Gov.	
John T. Rivers	Soil and Water Conservation Dist.	
Fred Castles	Special Purpose District	X
Northeast DMA		
Caleb Miller	Agriculture	
Karolan Ohanesian	Domestic User	X
Athena Strickland	Industry	X
Clint Elliott	Municipality	X

Charles Allen	Power Generation Facilities	X
Robert L. Brock	Private Water Supplier	X
Elbert Warren	Public Service District	
Lindsay Privette	Regional Council of Gov.	X
Joe Ghent	Soil and Water Conservation Dist.	X
Southern DMA		
James Traywick	Agriculture	
Jason Thompson	Commission of Public Works	X
Eric Odom	Municipalities	X
Matt McCants	Power Generation Facilities	X
Ronald E. Mitchum	Regional Council of Gov.	
Marion L. Rizer	Soil and Water Conservation Dist.	
State Agency Members		
Ken Rentiers	SCDNR, LWC Division	X
Dave Thachik	SC Emergency Management Divis.	
Joe Koon	SCDHEC	X
Stephen Patterson	SC Forestry Commission	X
Sam Quinney	SC Department of Agriculture	X
Appointment Pending Members		
Christopher Sandifer	Southern DMA	Domestic User
Other Participants		
Hope Mizzell	SCDNR	X
Elliot Wickham	SCDNR	X
Scott Harder	SCDNR	X
Priyanka More	SCDNR	X
Stephen Fastenau	SCDNR	X
Cheryl Daniels	McCormick CPW	X
Mark Warner	McCormick County Government	X

Leigh Ann Monroe	SCDHEC	X
Brandon Lambert	FSA	X
Brice Shuler	FSA	X
Kayla Stroman	FSA	X
Glenn Thomas	FSA	X
Hope Morton	FSA	X
Beth Blackwell	FSA	X
Josh Palmer	NWS – Greer	X
Frank Alsheimer	NWS - Columbia	X
Leonard Vaughan	NWS - Columbia	X
Denise Bisnett	Santee Cooper	X