

Drought Response Committee Conference Call

Date: March 26th, 2025

Time: 10:00 a.m.

A Drought Response Committee Conference Call was conducted at 10:00 a.m., March 26th, 2025. Notice of the date, time and call-in information was posted and provided on the scdrought.com website.

I. Introduction

- a. Hope Mizzell - Stated that the meeting is being recorded and reads the Freedom of Information Statement.
- b. Hope (SCDNR) asks for a motion to approve the minutes from the last meeting, which took place on February 26th.
 - i. Fred Castles, 1st
 - ii. Brad Powers, 2nd
- c. Hope (SCDNR) discusses the Drought Tabletop Exercise from earlier this month. She thanks the Committee Members who attended and is pleased with the results and feedback from the meeting.
 - i. She shares some images and examples of the presentation used at the event, as well as highlights.

II. PowerPoint Presentation

- a. Hope (SCDNR) discusses the last Drought Committee Meeting. She emphasizes the importance of reaching a quorum in each Drought Management Area (DMA), otherwise, a vote is not possible.
- b. Hope (SCDNR) shows the 30-day rainfall, the 60-day rainfall, 30-day SPI and US Drought Monitor. A few areas received above normal rainfall over the last 30 days, but most of the state is still dry.
- c. Hope (SCDNR) then displays the Clemson Extension Tempest Weather Station Data which varies across the state.
- d. Hope (SCDNR) shows the CoCoRaHS data from each DMA.
 - i. The West DMA received below normal rainfall. The Central, Southern, and Northeastern DMAs all vary throughout their respective areas.

III. State Agency Reports

- a. Hannah Hartley, SCDES

- i. She states that the upstate is dry, but the coast is beginning to improve.
 - ii. She then shows the data for streamflow, lake and reservoir levels, and groundwater.
 - 1. In terms of streamflow, the Northeast and West DMAs are running low. The Central DMA varies across the area; the Southern DMA appears to be improving.
 - 2. Lake and Reservoir levels are around average statewide. Lake Hartwell is about normal for this time of year.
 - 3. As for groundwater, the levels vary across the state. The Northeast and Central DMAs are normal to above normal, while the West DMA is below normal in the upper area of the basin. The Southern DMA varies across the basin.
 - iii. Hope (SCDNR) asks if there are any questions.
- b. Leslie Woodham, Forestry Commission
 - i. He states that the low KBDI values are not representative of the number of wildfires we are currently dealing with. The damage from Hurricane Helene is hindering the response efforts.
 - ii. Hope (SCDNR) displays the SC Forestry Commission Wildfire website.
- c. Hope (SCDNR) displays USDA Field Reports that are received on a weekly basis. She then asks for any input from other state agencies.
 - i. Jordan Van Delden, SCEMD, says they are currently operating under OPGON 2 due to the wildfires

IV. PowerPoint (continued)

- a. Hope (SCDNR) shows the short- and long-term forecasts.
 - i. The 7-day outlook does not seem promising in terms of rainfall. The 6-to-10-day outlook shows a slight improvement. The drought outlook states that the drought will continue to persist.
 - ii. Blair Holloway, NWS, says it is bad timing for warm temperatures with below-average precipitation. Also from the National Weather Service, Frank Alsheimer says there's more moisture in the air this weekend, which should provide some help in the wildfire fight. Across the state, there are hit-or-miss rainfall chances this weekend. Locally, over an inch of rainfall is possible in some areas.

V. Open Discussion and Vote

- a. West DMA
 - i. Brian Chemsak says the southern part of the West DMA is normal.

- ii. Yvonne Kling suggests Edgefield should move to incipient drought, and Aiken is drier than usual and could also move to incipient.
- iii. Scott Willett says the upper DMA counties should move to an incipient declaration. Mark Warner and Rick Green agree.
- iv. Lynn McEwen says in the chat that all the counties in the West DMA are dry. She is fine with maintaining the current status but wants to keep an eye on Barnwell and Allendale counties.
- v. Motion: Aiken, Edgefield, McCormick, Abbeville, Anderson, Oconee, and Pickens counties move to incipient. The rest of the counties remain normal.
 - 1. Yvonne Kling, 1st
 - 2. Scott Willett 2nd

b. Central DMA

- i. Ken Tuck says it's roughly the same in his area as it was in the last meeting.
- ii. Fred Castles says Chester County is dry. He supports remaining in an incipient drought.
- iii. Hope (SCDNR) asks if there has been enough rain in the midlands to retain normal status.
- iv. Hannah Hartley (SCDES) says the streamflow in the Midlands are normal.
- v. Jimmy Bagley supports leaving the Central DMA as it is.
- vi. Motion: Maintain current declaration.
 - 1. Jimmy Bagley, 1st
 - 2. Brad Powers, 2nd

c. Southern DMA

- i. Eric Odom says Orangeburg County has been dry. He asks what people in the agricultural sector recommend. He supports maintaining the current levels.
- ii. Hope (SCDNR) reads a message from Landrum Weathers, who could not be present on the call.
- iii. Jason Thompson says the reservoir levels have increased since the last call. He asks if they should remain in the incipient drought.
- iv. Russ Cornette suggests maintaining the status quo, and Matt McCants agrees.
- v. Motion to maintain incipient drought for Berkeley, Charleston, and Dorchester Counties and normal status for Colleton and Orangeburg.
 - 1. Eric Odom, 1st

2. Matt McCants, 2nd

d. Northeast DMA

i. Athena Strickland recommends maintaining the current declaration since rainfall has continued to run below normal for the DMA. Joe Ghent agrees.

ii. Motion to maintain all counties in incipient drought.

1. Athena Strickland, 1st

2. Joe Ghent, 2nd

VI. Closing Remarks

a. Hope (SCDNR) thanks everyone for their time and cooperation. The next meeting will take place on Wednesday, April 30th, at 10:00am.

b. Motion to adjourn the meeting

i. Scott Willett, 1st

ii. Joe Ghent, 2nd

c. Meeting adjourned.

Committee Members	Group	Attendance 03/26/2025
West DMA		
Reg Williams	Agriculture	
Cheryl Daniels	Commission of Public Works	X
Mark Warner	Counties	X
Eric Carrier	Domestic User	
David Evans	Industry	
Lynn McEwen	Municipalities	X
Preston Pierce	Power Generation Facilities	
J. Scott Willett	Private Water Supplier	X
Chris Rasco	Public Service District	X
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	
Ken Tuck	Commission of Public Works	X

Peggy Swearingen	Counties	
Christy Jones	Domestic User	X
Ed Holder	Industry	
James G. Bagley	Municipalities	X
Alan Stuart	Power Generation Facilities	
Brad C. Powers	Private Water Supplier	X
	Public Service District	VACANT
Gregory Sprouse	Regional Council of Gov.	
John T. Rivers	Soil and Water Conservation Dist.	X
Fred Castles	Special Purpose District	X
Northeast DMA		
Caleb Miller	Agriculture	
	Commission of Public Works	VACANT
Karolan Ohanesian	Domestic User	
Athena Strickland	Industry	X
Clint Elliott	Municipality	
	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	
Jason Thompson	Commission of Public Works	X
Larry Harper	Counties	Appointment Pend.
Chris Wallace	Domestic User	
Chris Muckenfuss	Industry	Appointment Pend.
Eric Odom	Municipalities	X
Matt McCants	Power Generation Facilities	X
	Private Water Supplier	VACANT

Russell Cornette	Public Service District	X
Ronald E. Mitchum	Regional Council of Gov.	
Marion L. Rizer	Soil and Water Conservation Dist.	X
	Special Purpose District	VACANT
State Agency Members		
Ken Rentiers	SCDNR, LWC Division	
Jordan Van Delden	SC Emergency Management Divis.	X
Joe Koon	SC Dept. of Environ. Services	
Darryl Jones	SC Forestry Commission	
Sam Quinney	SC Department of Agriculture	
Other Participants		
Hope Mizzell	SCDNR, LWC Division	X
Alyssa Paguaga	SCDNR, LWC Division	X
Hannah Hartley	SC DES	X
Blair Holloway	NWS	X
Leonard Vaughn	NWS	X
Frank Alsheimer	NWS	X
Leslie Woodham	SCFC	X