

Drought Response Committee Conference Call

Date: December 4th, 2024

Time: 10:00 a.m.

A Drought Response Committee Conference Call was conducted at 10:00 a.m., December 4th, 2024. Notice of the date, time and call-in information was posted and provided on the scdrought.com website. Chairman Ken Rentiers, Deputy Director of SC Department of Natural Resources (SCDNR) - Land, Water and Conservation Division presided at the meeting.

I. Introduction

- a. Hope Mizzell (SCDNR) gives an introduction. She welcomes everyone to the meeting.
- b. Ken Rentiers (SCDNR) officially calls the meeting.
 - i. He then gives notice of the meeting being recorded.
- c. Hope (SCDNR) introduces everyone in the room. He and Ken (SCDNR) are joined by Melissa Griffin, Assistant State Climatologist (SCDNR), and Alyssa Paguaga, State Climatology Intern (SCDNR).
- d. Hope (SCDNR) conducts the roll call. This is done at the beginning of each meeting to ensure there are enough members for a quorum in each drought area.
- e. Hope (SCDNR) announces we have a quorum in each of the drought areas.
- f. Ken (SCDNR) calls for approval of minutes from the previous meeting, held on November 6th, 2024.
 - i. Motion to approve minutes:
 1. Clint Elliott, 1st
 2. Alan Stuart, 2nd

II. PowerPoint Presentation

- a. Hope (SCDNR) talks about the recent cold weather. Temperatures in November were above normal, but this first week of December has been very cold.
- b. Hope (SCDNR) discusses the DRC license plates and the process is moving along into 2025.
- c. Hope (SCDNR) displays the drought website, scdrought.com.
- d. Hope (SCDNR) discusses our last meeting on November 6th, 2024. She believes that we overdid ourselves in some areas of the state; there were 6 to 14 inches of rain in some areas just days after the meeting. Orangeburg dealt with a “1000-year event”, which would be the third of those events in the state over the last few months. This storm was rare and not associated with a tropical event. Some areas of the state did not receive any rain from this, as it was largely concentrated over Orangeburg County and the surrounding areas.
 - i. From this storm, Hope (SCDNR) shows the hydrograph of the North Fork Edisto River; this event set a record of 15.34 feet, beating the 1928 record.

- e. Hope (SCDNR) shows the Clemson Tempest Station Data over the last month. This data is sent on a weekly basis.
- f. Hope (SCDNR) presents the 30-day rainfall since our last meeting. There are two maps, one with precipitation and one with the percentage of normal precipitation.
- g. Hope (SCDNR) displays the 14-day rainfall. There has not been a lot of rain along the coast, but there was some rain in the upstate. Overall, the state has not received much rainfall.
- h. Hope (SCDNR) shows the 30-day Standard Precipitation Index (SPI). The last meeting showed severe designations, but it has since improved, and it is reaching normal levels.
- i. Hope (SCDNR) displays the CoCoRaHS data for the last month.
 - i. The West and Central Drought Management Areas (DMAs) had a wide range of rainfall totals.
 - ii. In the Southern DMA, there was also a wide range, with the biggest difference being from the early November storm, and areas that were not affected by it. The Charleston area did not receive much rainfall.
 - iii. The Northeastern DMA has the lowest rainfall totals of the entire state, minus Lancaster County, which had a decent amount of rainfall.
- j. Hope (SCDNR) shows the seven most recent U.S. Drought Monitor (USDM) maps. These are updated by the U.S. Drought Monitor every week.
- k. Hope (SCDNR) shows the Crop Moisture Index (CMI).
 - i. She reminds everyone that the data tables for the CMI were not accurate, and they have been working on a new format. The map displayed is correct, however it is for the entire country, and not just South Carolina.
- l. Hope (SCDNR) displays the Palmer Drought Severity Index (PDSI).
 - i. The only drought area in the state is along the coast.
- m. State Agency Reports provided by Scott Harder, SCDES
 - i. Streamflow 14-Day Average:
 - 1. Drier than usual in the upstate.
 - 2. Much wetter across the Edisto basin.
 - 3. Some areas along the PeeDee River are drier.
 - ii. Streamflow Regulatory Standards:
 - 1. No indicators of drought.
 - iii. Streamflow table:
 - 1. Some areas of incipient drought.
 - iv. Hydrographs:
 - 1. Northeast DMA is doing fine but declining and below normal. Waccamaw River levels are declining.
 - 2. Most of the West and Central DMAs are below normal.
 - 3. Southern DMA wettest part of the state and are well above normal

- v. Lake and Reservoir Levels:
 1. Reservoirs are in good shape overall.
 2. A few locations along the western area of the state are below normal.
 3. Projection of Hartwell Reservoir that is from mid-November.
- vi. Groundwater:
 1. Lack of data due to movement from DNR to DES.
 2. Several locations are below normal.
 3. Northeast DMA is normal to above normal.
 4. Central DMA is below normal to normal.
 5. West DMA below normal for the last month but lots of rain in Jasper County.
 6. Southeastern DMA is below normal.
- n. SC Forestry Commission by Doug Mills
 - i. KDBI Station Values:
 1. Drought index values higher along the coast.
 2. Significant fire weather outlook for December into January along the coastline, as well as some areas of the upstate.
 - ii. Hope (SCDNR) asks for clarification, and there has been an influx of warmer air that has prevented fires up to this point, but there is likely an uptick in fire potential due to incoming cold weather.
 1. The biggest concern is in the upstate due to downed trees from Hurricane Helene and fuels that are available for fire.
- o. Hope (SCDNR) asks for any reports from water systems, which there are none. She asks for input from SCEMD, who are busy from hurricane cleanup and the storm in Orangeburg; they lost 20 dams or so. She encourages others to keep up with their dams. She asks for input from Sam Quinney who says they are waiting for numbers from USDA. There are no significant problems currently. She then asks if any federal partners or others want to participate, which no one does.
- p. Hope (SCDNR) presents the short- and long-term forecasts:
 - i. 7-day forecast updated this morning the projections have gone up statewide. The coastal plain is expecting less rain than the rest of the state, but more rain in the far northwest of the state.
 1. Hope asks if Frank A. (NWS) wants to add anything, he does not.
 - ii. 6–10-day outlook shows near normal temperatures and a higher chance for above normal precipitation.
 - iii. CPC 3-month outlook shows that temperatures will be above normal, and precipitation will be below normal it is La Nina.
 - iv. She shows the drought outlook which follows the CPC forecast.
 - v. Hope (SCDNR) asks for questions:

1. Frank A. (NWS) says in the chat that there is a chance of rain next week in the western half of the state
- q. Hope (SCDNR) opens the floor for open discussion.
- i. She shows the data review from the previous slides. Much of the state is still showing incipient drought. She anticipates downgrading some counties. She warns to be cautious moving up due to the upcoming cold winter.
 - ii. West DMA:
 1. Scott Willett proposes the upper areas to stay incipient, and there is not an urgent need to increase the status.
 2. Preston Pierce and Chris Rasco agree. Mark Warner says that there is no need to upgrade McCormick County.
 3. Lynn McEwen says there was a lot of rain at once, but not much since. She suggests moving Barnwell County, Allendale County and maybe some others back to normal.
 - a. She recommends downgrading Barnwell and Allendale, but not sure of the areas elsewhere.
 4. Brian Chemsak says the lower part of the basin benefited from the storm at the beginning of the month, but it has not rained much since. It has been drier to normal in these areas.
 5. Hope (SCDNR) states that Edgefield County has been drier and has missed out on rain.
 6. Hope (SCDNR) asks for others' thoughts, and Doug M and Sam Q. agree with the previous points.
 7. Ken (SCDNR) files for a motion.
 - a. David Evans, 1st
 - b. Preston Pierce, 2nd
 8. Motion carries unanimously.
 9. Recommendation:
 - a. Normal: Aiken to Beaufort
 - b. Incipient: Edgefield north
 - iii. Southern DMA
 1. Jason T. says they received about 2 inches in the Goose Creek area in the beginning of November. Other areas got much more precipitation. The reservoirs nearby are full. He suggests keeping Charleston and Berkeley in the incipient because it is dry, and there is a risk for fire.
 2. Russell C. agrees with Jason and adds Dorchester County into the mix.

3. Matthew M. agrees, saying Berkeley and Charleston counties are still lacking in rainfall.
4. Eric C. agrees, saying Orangeburg should be out of drought.
5. Marion Rizer says Colleton and Bamberg counties should be downgraded.
6. Chris Wallace agrees with all the above.
7. Ken (SCDNR) calls for a motion.
 - a. Jason Thompson, 1st
 - b. Marion Rizer, 2nd
8. Motion carries unanimously.
9. Recommendation:
 - a. Normal: Orangeburg, Bamberg, Colleton
 - b. Incipient: Charleston, Berkeley, Dorchester

iv. Central DMA

1. Brad P. suggests leaving the upstate in incipient.
2. Peggy S. says Chester and Fairfield counties should stay in incipient.
3. Alan S. says the same for York and Cherokee counties, does not warrant a downgrade.
4. Hope (SCDNR) says the southern areas of Richland County received a lot of rain, but the other surrounding areas have not. Williamsburg and Georgetown counties are about normal.
5. Clint E. says Georgetown should stay incipient, they have received some rain, but not a significant amount.
6. Brad P. asks the group if Lexington and Richland counties are about the same, which they are.
7. Hope (SCDNR) says there is support in the Midlands for a change.
8. Gregory S. supports a downgrade for Lexington, Richland, Calhoun and down to Williamsburg and to keep the rest at incipient drought.
9. Ken (SCDNR) calls for a motion.
 - a. Gregory Sprouse, 1st
 - b. Jimmy Bagley, 2nd
10. Motion carries unanimously.
11. Recommendation:
 - a. Incipient: Williamsburg and Georgetown move to incipient and the rest to remain in incipient.
 - b. Normal: Lexington, Richland, Calhoun.

v. Northeast DMA

1. Joe G. suggests staying in incipient drought in the upper counties.

2. Nathan Ward says Kershaw and Lee counties should stay in incipient because they haven't received much rain.
 3. Clint E. says Horry County is like Georgetown, and they haven't seen many changes and suggest leaving it at incipient. They are still recovering from earlier events and do not want to jump to moderate.
 4. Karolan O. agrees.
 5. Ken (SCDNR) calls for a motion.
 - a. Joe Ghent, 1st
 - b. Clint Elliott, 2nd
 6. Motion carries unanimously.
 7. Recommendation: All counties in incipient drought.
- vi. Proposed next meetings:
1. January 15th does not work, but Hope (SCDNR) does not want to push the meeting back too far
 2. January 22nd is the proposed date. It is far out but we are hoping for enough rain. We are moving in the beginning of January
 3. There is a tabletop exercise on March 5th.
 4. Hope (SCDNR) and Ken (SCDNR) thanks everyone for their participation and wish everyone a happy holiday.
- vii. Ken (SCDNR) calls for a motion to close the meeting
1. Clint Elliott, 1st
 2. Preston Pierce, 2nd
- viii. Meeting is adjourned.

Committee Members	Group	Attendance 12/04/2024
West DMA		
Reg Williams	Agriculture	
Cheryl Daniels	Commission of Public Works	X
Mark Warner	Counties	X
Eric Carrier	Domestic User	
David Evans	Industry	X
Lynn McEwen	Municipalities	X
Preston Pierce	Power Generation Facilities	X
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.	
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
	Public Service District	VACANT
Gregory Sprouse	Regional Council of Gov.	X
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	
Clint Elliott	Municipality	X
	Power Generation Facilities	VACANT

	Private Water Supplier	VACANT
Alan Watkins	Counties	X
Elbert Warren	Public Service District	
Lindsay Privette	Regional Council of Gov.	X
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
Larry Harper	Counties	Appointment Pend.
Chris Wallace	Domestic User	X
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	X
Dave Thachik	SC Emergency Management Divis.	X
Leigh Anne Monroe	SC Dept. of Environ. Services	X
Doug Mills	SC Forestry Commission	X
Sam Quinney	SC Department of Agriculture	X

Other Participants		
Hope Mizzell	SCDNR, LWC Division	X
Melissa Griffin	SCDNR, LWC Division	X
Alyssa Paguaga	SCDNR, LWC Division	X
Dwight Cauthen	SC Farm Bureau	X
Kayla Stroman	FSA	X
Alexis Modzelesky	SC Dept. of Environ. Services	X
Frank Alsheimer	NWS Columbia	X
Elliot Wickham	NOAA/CIROH	X
Richard Geddings		X
Baker Stevens		X
Colby Thrash		X