

## **Drought Response Committee Conference Call**

**Date: August 13th, 2024**

**Time: 10:00 a.m.**

A Drought Response Committee Conference Call was conducted at 10:00 a.m., August 13th, 2024. Notice of the date, time and call-in information was posted and provided on the [scdrought.com](http://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. Ken Rentiers introduced everyone in the room and turned it over to Hope Mizzell.
- b. Hope reads Freedom of Information Statement and introduces the agenda for the meeting.

### **II. Roll Call**

- a. Hope Mizzell, SCDNR State Climatologist, completed Roll Call
  - i. Quorum met.
- b. Ken reiterates distribution of minutes from the last meeting.
  - i. Motion to Approve Minutes
    1. Karolan Ohanesian, Northeast DMA Domestic User, 1st
    2. Yvonne Kling, West DMA Soil and Water Conservation Districts, 2nd
  - ii. Unanimous Motion

### **III. PowerPoint Presentation**

- a. Hope, SCDNR states we are waiting for the DMV to approve license plates. No updates on this from the last meeting.
- b. Hope, SCDNR discusses Drought Resources Website ([scdrought.com](http://scdrought.com))
  - i. Hope displays the status as of last committee meeting. Tropical Storm Debby dropped too much rain over much of the state, causing a lot of flooding.
- c. Hope, SCDNR Discusses:
  - i. The 30-day departure from Normal Precipitation, the 30-day SPI, the 60-day percent of normal precipitation, the 60-day SPI.
  - ii. A chart of the (preliminary) Tropical Storm Debby rainfall totals. It displays the highest rainfall total by county, with the Moncks Corner station in Berkeley County receiving the highest amount of rain.
    1. Uses a spatial map to display the rainfall data.
  - iii. The CoCoRaHS data for each county in each Drought Management Area (DMA)

- iv. The 30-day maximum temperature and departure maps.
- d. A comparison of the U.S. drought monitor from the last two weeks. She anticipates a two-level downgrade in some areas.
  - i. Elliot Wickham, SCDNR states the improvements across the state. Does not usually do a two-level jump between drought distinctions.
- e. Hope, SCDNR shows an opportunity for a Drought Monitor Workshop on the 14<sup>th</sup>.
- f. Discussion of the Crop Moisture Index (CMI).
  - i. There were some inconsistencies, so the NOAA pulled the CMI maps from their website and are working through it.
- g. Discussion of the Palmer Drought Severity Index (PDSI).
- h. Scott Harder, SC. Dept. of Environmental Services, opens the conversation.
  - i. Discusses the 14-day average streamflow from July 22<sup>nd</sup>-August 12<sup>th</sup>.
  - ii. Discusses the regulatory standards from the current 14-day average streamflow.
  - iii. Shows a table of the 14-day and 28-day streamflow percentiles.
  - iv. Showed select USGS hydrographs for select streams in each DMA.
  - v. Discussed Lake and Reservoir Levels
    - 1. Savannah River in Stage 1 Drought as of last Friday.
    - 2. Lake Keowee moved to Stage 0.
    - 3. Shows outdated Hartwell Reservoir graph; will probably stay at Stage 1 drought.
  - vi. Discussed Groundwater
    - 1. The coastal plain is receiving a lot of groundwater, as well as the Northeast.
    - 2. Greenville County just started to trend downward.
    - 3. Laurens County has not had a ton of rainfall.
    - 4. Oconee continues to decline, but still normal.
    - 5. Aiken received a significant amount of rain.
    - 6. Charleston moved back to normal conditions after all the rain.
    - 7. Would recommend most of the state to move out of the drought, minus the upper left corner (Oconee, Pickens, and Anderson) where they should remain in incipient.
    - 8. Wants to remove the Allendale well; needs to be investigated.
- i. Hope, SCDNR, confirms that the U.S. Army Corps Lakes moved to stage 1 drought and the Duke Energy lakes moved to stage 0.

- j. Hope, SCNDR, asks if any one has questions on the indicators and data.
- IV. State Agency Report**
- a. Hope, SCDNR asked if there are direct implications for farmers with our state declaration.
  - b. Sam Quinney, S.C. Dept. of Agriculture.
    - i. If the state map enters incipient, moderate, or severe, Agriculture does not see any direct payments from that.
    - ii. Agricultural entities, such as S.C. Farm Bureau and S.C. Department of Agriculture, get a lot of questions when the state map isn't changing.
      - 1. He noted that there is a misperception that if the state map does not change, then the U.S. Drought Monitor map will not change.
    - iii. Overall, we're trying to let everyone know how agriculture is affected and getting producers to report conditions for the U.S. Drought Monitor.
  - c. Elliot, SCDNR, checks to make sure nobody has any questions.
  - d. Hope, SCDNR, discusses the upcoming U.S. Drought Monitor Workshop and having other workshops, particularly outside the growing season
  - e. Sam Quinney, S.C. Dept. of Agriculture has been promoting increased use of the CMOR tool and the CoCoRaHS program.
  - f. Hope, SCDNR, asks for any questions.
  - g. Doug Mills, S.C. Forestry Commission.
    - i. Discusses the below-normal fire activity over the past few weeks, especially in the western part of the state.
    - ii. 18 of the weather stations have KBDI values in the normal range, 1 in incipient drought range, and 2 in the severe drought range.
  - h. Hope, SCDNR once again opens the floor for questions.
  - i. Joe Koon, S.C. Dept. of Environmental Services, no additional updates.
  - j. Dave Thachik, S.C. Emergency Management Division, states that three counties are having river flooding problems, no reports for drought.

**V. PowerPoint Presentation (continued)**

- a. Hope SCDNR, discusses
  - i. 7-day precipitation forecast, rain totals are likely to be lower in areas that need the rain, and higher in areas that do not need the rain.
  - ii. 6-10 Day Outlook shows that we are likely to experience above normal temperature and normal to above normal precipitation
  - iii. CPC 3-month outlook

1. Has not been updated since last month, but both temperatures and precipitation outlooks are for above normal conditions.
- iv. Drought Outlook has not been updated in almost a month, but drought conditions should improve.
- v. images of flooding in Bamberg and Dorchester counties, much of it from T.S. Debby, were presented.
- b. Sam Quinney, S.C. Department of Agriculture, discusses the excess water damage closer to the coast.
- c. Hope, SCDNR, asks for any input from our federal partners and other participants.
- d. Hope, SCDNR, shows a quick review of the data used for indicators of declaring a drought.

## **VI. Northeast DMA Discussion**

- a. Hope displays the CoCoRaHS data for the Northeast DMA. Will most likely downgrade, with enough data for potential 2-level downgrade to normal status.
- b. Caleb Miller, DMA Agriculture, supports a two-level downgrade to normal due to rain totals.
- c. Hope, SCDNR, discusses high rainfall totals in July and from the tropical storm in August. While the committee tries to avoid two-level changes, it is acceptable in specific circumstances.
- d. Clint Elliott, DMA Municipalities, agrees with Caleb Miller. With the rainfall and the river levels, with some not having crested yet, and widespread standing water, the Northeast DMA would be good going back to normal conditions.
- e. Joe Ghent, DMA Soil and Water Conservation Districts, agrees with the prior two participants for a two level downgrade to normal for the DMA.
- f. Hope, SCDNR, asks for any other input or statements before the vote. No given.
- g. **MOTION:**
  - i. Officially called by Ken Rentiers, SCDNR
  - ii. motion: two-level downgrade to normal conditions for the entire Northeast DMA.
  - iii. Clint Elliott, DMA Municipalities, 1<sup>st</sup>
  - iv. Karolan Ohanesian, DMA Domestic User 2<sup>nd</sup>
  - v. Members of the Northeast DMA unanimously agreed on the motion.

## **VII. Central DMA**

- a. Hope discusses the potential for a three-level downgrade, which we try to avoid. Some areas have received almost 10 inches of rain. Upstate

- received rain, just not as much as the rest of the state. Support for a downgrade for most of the DMA. Opens the floor for discussion.
- b. Alan Stuart, DMA Power Generation Facilities, wants to move York, Chester, Cherokee, and Fairfield to normal conditions, based on rainfall and discussions.
    - i. Elliot, SCDNR, clarifies the counties that Alan Stuart, DMA Power Generation Facilities put forth for going to normal.
  - c. Hope, SCDNR, suggests starting with the Upstate and then moving to the Lowcountry.
  - d. Ken Tuck, DMA Commission of Public Works, says they received significant rainfall in Greenville and Spartanburg counties this morning, which is not reflected in the data, as the data was from 8/12 and prior. He is comfortable with normal conditions for Greenville and Spartanburg Counties. The storms from this morning also may have hit Laurens, Union, and Newberry counties, which could downgrade to incipient drought. The upper part of the Upstate could go to normal status.
  - e. John Irwin, DMA Agriculture, states Laurens County didn't receive high rainfall from T.S. Debby and some further spotty showers which has caused some green-up. However, given past conditions back through the fall of 2023, there is concern of subsoil moisture. He supports a downgrade from moderate to incipient drought. While things have seen improvement, there is concern that things have not fully recovered since from the previous two droughts (Fall 2023, Summer 2024).
  - f. Hope discusses the rainfall total differences from month to month as displayed in the chart, which could lead to changes in county drought levels.
  - g. Elliot, SCDNR, read aloud the chat discussion from Glen Thomas, FSA. There are still some areas with dry conditions. Greenville and Spartanburg did not receive a ton of rain from T.S. Debby.
    - i. Elliot, SCDNR then stated that there are some inconsistencies across the upstate when it comes to rainfall totals.
  - h. Hope, SCDNR, provides further discussion on varying rainfall totals across the top half of the Central DMA.
  - i. Chris Rasco, West DMA Public Service District, further discusses the inconsistencies of rain across the upstate, particularly in Pickens, Anderson, Greenville, and Laurens counties. Rain has been hit or miss.
  - j. Ken Tuck, DMA Commission of Public Works, reiterated the significant rainfall totals this morning before the call in Spartanburg County.
  - k. Hope, SCDNR, asks for input on what should be done for Laurens, Union, and Newberry counties.

- l. John Irwin, DMA Agriculture, the unpredictability of spotty showers, does not support a two-level downgrade in Laurens County but supports a one-level downgrade.
- m. Hope, SCDNR, states that it would be similar for Greenwood County as well, given what will likely happen with the U.S. Drought Monitor. Asks, what changes could happen for Union County?
- n. Ken Tuck, DMA Commission of Public Works, states that from his perspective Union County can be downgraded by two levels.
- o. Brad Powers, DMA Private Water Supplier, agree with Ken Tuck that Union can be downgraded two levels to normal status. He did not have a lot of information on Laurens County so he defers to members that live in that area.
- p. Hope, SCDNR, reviewing the discussion, Union County would go down two levels, Laurens County would go down one level, Greenwood County down one level, all other counties in incipient status would go down to no drought (normal status). Ask for further discussion / input on Saluda and Newberry counties.
- q. Elliot, SCDNR, read aloud additional chat discussion from Glen Thomas, FSA, as his microphone is not working. Glenn does not want to drop two levels, except for Cherokee County. The northern part of Union County was struggling, but things have changed since the last meeting.
- r. Hope, SCDNR asks what to do about Newberry and Saluda Counties.
- s. Scott Harder, Dept. of Environmental Services, supports a two-level drop, except for counties in the Upper Savannah River basin area of the state, due to hydrologic indicators. Also comfortable with some areas staying in incipient based on committee member feedback.
- t. Elliot, SCDNR, pulls up the USGS streamflow map showing that Newberry County and south area seeing well above normal flows.
- u. Hope, SCDNR, it seems that Saluda and Newberry counties could go to normal status. Asks S.C. Forestry Commission that there are not any fire problems in the area.
- v. Doug Mills, S. C. Forestry Commission, confirms that there are no fire problems in that area.
- w. Sam Quinney, S.C. Department of Agriculture, does not have a problem with Saluda and Newberry moving to normal status.
- x. Gregory Sprouse, DMA Regional Council of Governments, agrees that Saluda and Newberry can move to normal status.
- y. Hope, SCNDR, then asks Sam Quinny about his perspective on Union County, since there are multiple member perspectives if it should be downgraded one or two levels.

- z. Sam Quinney, S.C. Department of Agriculture, the southern end of Union County is slightly dry, but the county overall is in more normal conditions.
- aa. Hope, SCDNR, move to Lexington and Richland counties, asking for member input. None is given, so she asks Sam Quinney for his perspective.
- bb. Sam Quinney, S.C. Department of Agriculture, Due to the recent rainfall levels and the wetter, current conditions, Lexington and Richland counties could go to normal status.
- cc. Hope, SCDNR, then asks Sam Quinney for his opinion on a three-level downgrade for the four counties in Severe Status.
- dd. Sam Quinney, S.C. Department of Agriculture, discusses that based on the amount of rain that those areas received, Calhoun, Sumter, Clarendon, and Williamsburg counties can go from severe to normal conditions.
- ee. Hope, SCDNR, states that with those counties having a three-category downgrade, Georgetown County could see a two-category downgrade to normal conditions.
- ff. Clint Elliott, Northeast DMA Municipalities, states that from his perspective in Horry County, Williamsburg and Georgetown counties could both go back to normal conditions.
- gg. **MOTION:**
  - i. Officially called by Ken Rentiers, SCDNR
  - ii. Motion: put Laurens and Greenwood counties in incipient drought, and all other counties in the Central DMA in normal status.
    - 1. Alan Stuart, DMA Power Generation Facilities, 1<sup>st</sup>
    - 2. Brad Powers, DMA Private Water Systems, 2<sup>nd</sup>
  - iii. Members of the Central DMA unanimously agreed on the motion.

## VIII. Southern DMA

- a. Hope opens the floor for discussion.
- b. Jason Thompson, DMA Commission of Public Works, discusses how after the last meeting, the Southern DMA received multiple rain events that helped to improve streamflow conditions, which were prior to Tropical Storm Debby. Currently, from this storm, there is on-going flooding throughout much of the Southern DMA. Given the rain totals since the previous meeting, there is not any data to support keeping any of the Southern DMA in any drought category.
- c. Eric Odom, DMA Municipalities, stated that the entire Southern DMA should not be in a drought category.
- d. **MOTION:**
  - i. Officially called by Ken Rentiers, SCDNR

- ii. Motion: All Southern DMA counties come out of drought status, into normal status
  - 1. Jason Thompson, DMA Commission of Public Works 1st
  - 2. Eric Odom, DMA Municipalities 2<sup>nd</sup>
- iii. Members of the Southern DMA unanimously agreed on the motion.

**IX. West DMA**

- a. Hope discusses the rainfall numbers as displayed in the chart and then opens the discussion.
- b. Brian Chemsak, DMA Special Purpose District, supports the southern portion of the DMA returning to normal based on the rainfall.
- c. Yvonne Kling, DMA Soil and Water Conservation Districts, supports a two-level downgrade in Aiken County. Not comfortable downgrading Pickens, Oconee, or Anderson counties out of drought. McCormick County still dry. But would like other members to weigh in on conditions north of Aiken County.
- d. Elliot, SCDNR, clarifies Aiken through Beaufort counties can be moved to normal.
- e. Yvonne Kling, DMA Soil and Water Conservation Districts, agrees with Elliot's clarification.
- f. Hope, SCDNR, asks about Abbeville, McCormick, and Edgefield counties.
- g. Mark Warner, DMA Counties, supports incipient for McCormick County due to the lake and stream levels.
- h. Yvonne Kling, DMA Soil and Water Conservation Districts, states that Edgefield is still dry, supports bringing down to incipient, not normal.
- i. Chris Rasco, DMA Public Service District, states the upper three counties (Pickens, Oconee, Anderson) should remain in incipient as there are persistent dry spots.
- j. Hope, SCDNR, asks Sam Quinney, S.C. Department of Agriculture, if he has any questions with the current proposal.
- k. Sam Quinney, S.C. Department of Agriculture, asks for clarification that Aiken to Beaufort counties would be normal status and Edgefield to Pickens and Oconee Counties would be incipient status. Hope, SCDNR, states that he is correct, and he supports the current proposal.

**I. MOTION**

- i. Officially called by Ken Rentiers, SCDNR.
- ii. Motion: All counties Aiken and South are in normal status, and counties above Aiken through Oconee and Pickens are in incipient status.
  - 1. Yvonne Kling, DMA Soil and Water Conservation Districts, 1<sup>st</sup>
  - 2. Mark Warner, DMA Counties, 2<sup>nd</sup>



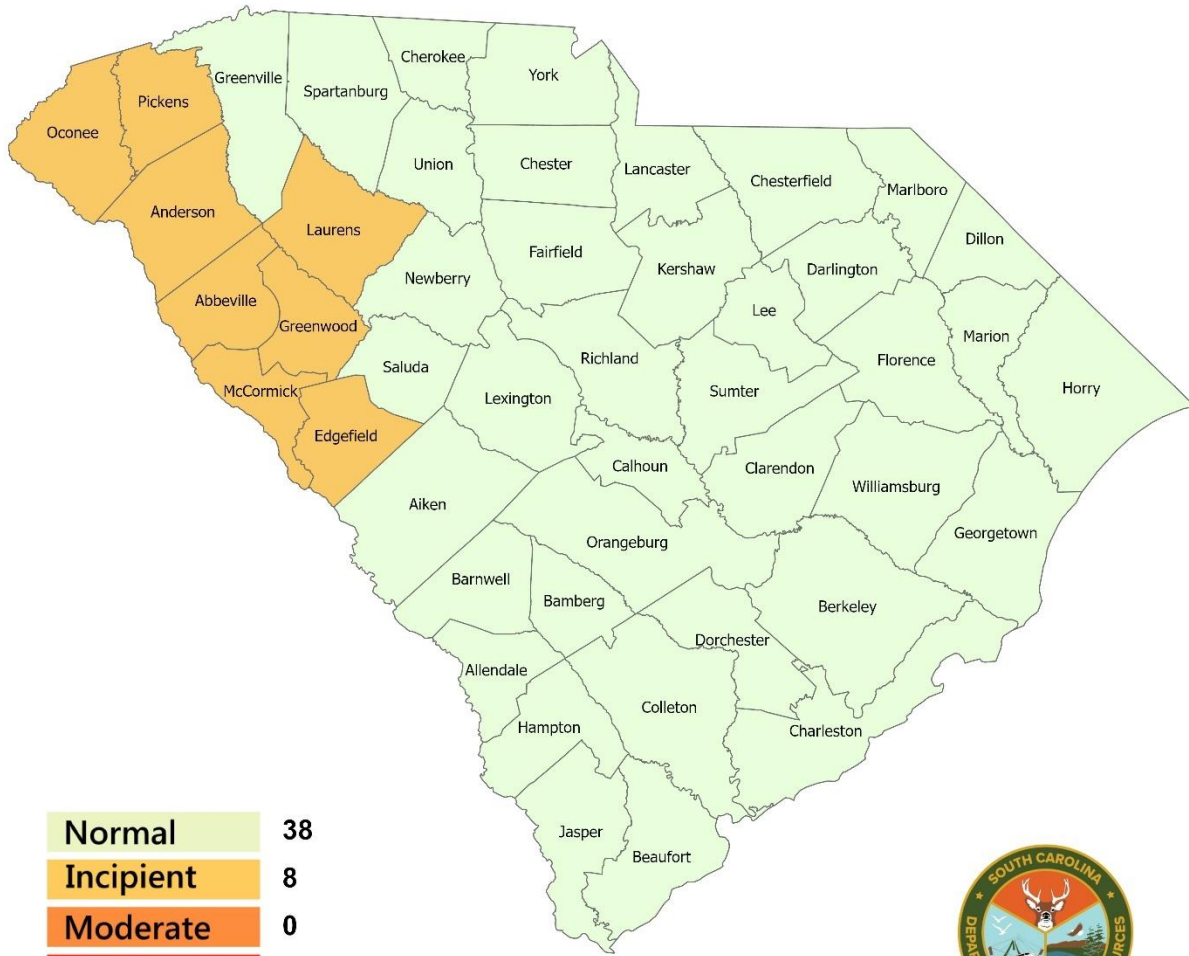
- iii. Members of the West DMA unanimously agreed on the motion.
- X. Closing Remarks
- a. Elliot and Hope restate the counties are in incipient drought status and those that are in normal status.
  - b. Cody Simpson, S.C. Governor's Office, thanks the members of the Drought Response Committee for their hard work and dedication to the cause, including the State Climatology Office.
  - c. Ken, SCDNR, thanks the Governor for his steadfast support of the Drought Response Committee and SCDNR.
  - d. Hope proposes Wednesday, September 4<sup>th</sup> for the next Drought Response Committee Meeting. Could be bumped up until August 28<sup>th</sup>. It is possible to only meet with the areas that are under a drought declaration.
  - e. Yvonne Kling, West DMA Soil and Water Conservation Districts, and Brad Powers, Central DMA Private Water Supplier, agree that the 4<sup>th</sup> of September works for the next meeting.
  - f. Ken Rentiers closes out the meeting.
  - g. Motion to adjourn:
    - i. Yvonne Kling, West DMA Soil and Water Conservation Districts, 1<sup>st</sup>
    - ii. Joe Ghent, Northeast DMA Soil and Water Conservation Districts, 2<sup>nd</sup>

### Updated County Statuses

- **Northeast DMA:** Every county in the Northeast DMA moves from Moderate Drought to No Drought Declaration.
- **Central DMA:** Moving all counties to normal except for Laurens and Greenwood, which go to Incipient Drought.
- **South DMA:** Every county in the Southern DMA move to No Drought Declaration.
- **West DMA:** Oconee, Pickens, Anderson, Abbeville, McCormick, and Edgefield move to Incipient Drought. Aiken, Barnwell, Allendale, Hampton, Jasper, and Beaufort move to No Drought Declaration.

# County Status Drought Map

Drought Status: 08-13-2024



Normal	38
Incipient	8
Moderate	0
Severe	0
Extreme	0

Number of counties in each category.



SC Department of Natural Resources  
State Climate Office

## Drought Committee Member Participation

<b>Committee Members</b>	<b>Group</b>	<b>Attendance 08/13/2024</b>
<b>West DMA</b>		
Reg Williams	Agriculture	
Cheryl Daniels	Commission of Public Works	
Mark Warner	Counties	<b>X</b>
Eric Carrier	Domestic User	
David Evans	Industry	<b>X</b>
	Municipalities	VACANT
Preston Pierce	Power Generation Facilities	
J. Scott Willett	Private Water Supplier	
Chris Rasco	Public Service District	<b>X</b>
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	<b>X</b>
Ken Tuck	Commission of Public Works	<b>X</b>
Peggy Swearingen	Counties	<b>X</b>
Christy Jones	Domestic User	<b>X</b>
Ed Holder	Industry	<b>X</b>
James G. Bagley	Municipalities	
Alan Stuart	Power Generation Facilities	<b>X</b>
Brad C. Powers	Private Water Supplier	<b>X</b>
	Public Service District	VACANT
Gregory Sprouse	Regional Council of Gov.	<b>X</b>

John T. Rivers	Soil and Water Conservation Dist.	<b>X</b>
Fred Castles	Special Purpose District	
<b>Northeast DMA</b>		
Caleb Miller	Agriculture	<b>X</b>
	Commission of Public Works	VACANT
Karolan Ohanesian	Domestic User	<b>X</b>
Athena Strickland	Industry	
Clint Elliott	Municipality	<b>X</b>
	Power Generation Facilities	VACANT
Alan Watkins	Counties	
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	Appointment Pend.
<b>Southern DMA</b>		
James Traywick	Agriculture	
Jason Thompson	Commission of Public Works	<b>X</b>
Larry Harper	Counties	Appointment Pend.
Chris Wallace	Domestic User	Appointment Pend.
Chris Muckenfuss	Industry	Appointment Pend.
Eric Odom	Municipalities	<b>X</b>
Matt McCants	Power Generation Facilities	<b>X</b>
	Private Water Supplier	VACANT
Russell Cornette	Public Service District	Appointment Pend.

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	X
Dave Thachik	SC Emergency Management Divis.	X
Joe Koon	SC Dept. of Environ. Services	X
Dough Mills	SC Forestry Commission	X
Sam Quinney	SC Department of Agriculture	X
<b>Other Participants</b>		
Hope Mizzell	SCDNR	X
Elliot Wickham	SCDNR	X
Alyssa Paguaga	SCDNR	X
Glenn Thomas	FSA	X
Christal Youmans	FSA	X
Kayla Stroman	FSA	X
Scott Harder	SCDES	X
Leigh Anne Monroe	SCDES	X
Russ McKinney	South Carolina Public Radio	X
Cody Simpson	SC Governor's Office	X
Hannah Mikell	Clemson Extension	X
Lynn Dunn	Duke Energy	X
Russ Cornette		X
Kyle Smith		X
Colby Thrash		X
The Seneca Journal		X