

Drought Response Committee Conference Call

Date: March 5, 2026

Time: 10:00 a.m.

A Drought Response Committee Conference Call was conducted at 10:00 a.m., March 5, 2026. Notice of the date, time, and call-in information was posted and provided on the scdrought.com website.

I. Introduction

- a. Ken Rentiers (SCDNR) opens the meeting and reads the agenda.
 - i. Ken (SCDNR) makes notice that this meeting is being recorded.
 - ii. Ken announces it will be his last meeting as the chairman of the Drought Response Committee. He will be retiring at the end of March after 17 years with DRC.
- b. Dr. Hope Mizzell (SCDNR) conducts the Drought Committee roll call.
 - i. There is a quorum in all DMAs.
 - ii. She does a roll call of state agency members, media, and any additional attendees.
- c. Ken Rentiers (SCDNR) puts forth a motion to approve the minutes of the last meeting, which took place on January 28, 2026
 - i. Jimmy Bagley, 1st
 - ii. Clint Elliott, 2nd
 - iii. Motion passes unanimously. Minutes have been approved.

II. PowerPoint Presentation

- a. Hope Mizzell (SCDNR) begins with the presentation.
 - i. Displays latest drought map from the latest meeting on January 28th – we have 46 counties in incipient drought.
 - ii. Dry across the state from November through January – ranked third driest.
 - iii. Focusing in on the Upstate and looking at the total rainfall compared to seasonal normals - Anderson and Greenville-Spartanburg though February (Feb. data preliminary) with the rainfall deficit increasing. Even with rainfall events shown in the line graph, the deficit is too large to make much of an improvement in drought.
 - iv. 30-day, 60-day, 90-day total rainfall and departure from normal: 60-day and 90-day maps show whole state below normal with Upstate at 25-50%.

- v. PDSI & CMI – Long term index (PDSI) shows upstate is the driest area of the state.
- vi. SPI – Shows improvement in the 30-day due to the recent rainfall, but when looking at the 60- and 90-day, they show the long-term drought we have be experiencing. Coming in at severe and extreme drought.
- vii. Drought Monitor graphics shows the change and increasing dry conditions throughout the past month. Introduction of D3 to much of the upstate in the Feb 10 through March 3. 14 counties with some D3 in the latest release on March 5th.
- viii. Viewed the four DMA 30- and 60-day rainfall totals for each county – the lowest and highest total rainfall. The data supports the variety of dry and wet conditions across the state over the past two months. Topography plays a large role in the range of rainfall totals in the Upstate counties.

b. State Agency Reports

- i. SCDES (Scott Harder) – The USGS no longer makes the 14- and 28-day average percentile maps. SCDES will make their own and show the 14-day average compared to current conditions. The Upstate remains dry and some worse than the previous meeting. Some improvement in areas that got the beneficial rainfall.
- ii. Using the regulatory method – comparing the current 14- and 28-day averages to the historical values.
 - 1. Northeast DMA – Some rainfall has brought some improvement but still in incipient status. Little Pee Dee at 10th percentile
 - 2. West DMA – Upstate very low, with some peaks, but flatline with streams below 10th percentile and hovering over 5th percentile line.
 - 3. Central DMA – Well below normal and base levels flatlining in the Upstate.
 - 4. Southern DMA – Recent rain has improved streamflow and notable improvement
- iii. Lake Levels – Keowee-Toxaway in stage level 2 of their LIP. Hard for lakes to fill up unless we get a lot of rainfall. Catawba-Wateree is at stage level 0 of their LIP. Hartwell Reservoir – Projected to stay below or at level 2 drought.
- iv. Groundwater – More widespread below normal groundwater. Since last meeting, some have dropped below normal. Some recharge in Northeast-

Lancaster well below normal with a bit of recharge for others, West - Oconee and Anderson well below normal with Aiken at normal, Central – Greenville continues to decline and below normal, but others have seen recharge and at normal status, South – Orangeburg has been able to sit at normal; some recharge in others.

v. Darryl Jones (SC Forestry Commission) – A lot of green but drought index is very low. Surface fuels benefit from rain. Fire moderated by rain and higher fuel moisture. March is likely to be a busy month and leaves dry out – it does not take much without rain and ignitions increase rapidly. Big fuels are getting drier with the long-term drought. February was a quiet month, but March may not be quite a lucky month.

vi. Jordan Van Delden (SCEMD) – No reports.

vii. Joe Koon (SCDES) – Not water shortages or limits

v. No one available from SC Department of Agriculture

c. PowerPoint Presentation

- i. Weekly QPF – Long term forecast shows rain across the state with higher amounts in the upstate (March 5-12)
- ii. 6-10 Day Outlook – Favorable conditions with above normal temperatures and above normal precipitation
- iii. Seasonal outlook – (March-April-May) – Favorable for above normal temps and near normal precipitation for spring.
- iv. Drought Outlook – Drought conditions likely to continue throughout March

III. Open Discussion and Vote

Hope Mizzell (SCDNR): Quorum in all DMAs

a. West DMA

- i. Brian Chemsak – Rain was helpful but was hoping to see more improvement. In favor of maintaining incipient in the lower western counties Jasper, Hampton, and Beaufort. Lynn agrees with Allendale too. Not enough rain to get out of incipient.
- ii. Mark Warner – McCormick keep in incipient, not sure about Abbeville.
- iii. Yvonne Kling – Lower Aiken got rain, but northern part is dry.
- iv. David Evans – Facility on stream and it's low. Pretty dry in Oconee. Supports moving to moderate.

- v. SCDES (Scott) – Hydrologic support to move the upper counties to moderate.
- vi. Mark Warner – Including lake levels, supports putting the counties into moderate (Abbeville, Anderson, Pickens, Oconee, and McCormick). Remainder in incipient.
- vii. Alan Stuart – Supports moving to moderate in Oconee.
- viii. Motion: McCormick, Abbeville, Anderson, Oconee, and Pickens Counties move to moderate. All other counties remain at incipient.
 - 1. Mark Warner, 1st.
 - 2. Yvonne Kling, 2nd
- ix. Motion passes unanimously.

b. Central DMA

- i. Fred Castles – Chester and southern York County have been getting small showers helping the top just to keep topsoil hydrated, but some green up. Supports those staying incipient.
- ii. Jimmy Bagley– agrees with Fred.
- iii. Ken Tuck – Greenville, Spartanburg, Laurens, Union, and Cherokee – similar indicators as in the northwest and recommend moving to moderate.
- iv. Peggy – Fairfield still dry but not enough for moderate.
- v. Rick Green – Greenwood should move to moderate. Saluda and Newberry stays at incipient.
- vi. Greg Sprouse – Lexington, Fairfield, and Calhoun stays at incipient.
- vii. Scott Harder (SCDES) – all others remain at incipient.
- vii. Motion: Greenville, Spartanburg, Laurens, Union, Cherokee, and Greenwood move to moderate. All other counties remain at incipient.
 - 1. Ken Tuck, 1st
 - 2. Jimmy Bagley, 2nd
- viii. Motion passes unanimously.

c. Northeast DMA

- i. Alan Watkins – Lee and Kershaw Co and areas close by have gotten decent rainfall - stay at incipient, but still low. Nathan Ward agrees.
- ii. Clint Elliott – All should stay at incipient. Rain has helped and more on the way. Maintain, but if we don't get more rain we may need to move up. Athena Strickland and Lindsay Privette agree.
- iii. Joe Ghent – Agrees keeping incipient.

- iii. Motion: Keep all counties at status quo in incipient.
 - 1. Clint Elliott, 1st
 - 2. Karolan Ohanesian, 2nd
- iv. Motion passes unanimously.

d. Southern DMA

- i. Eric Odom – Orangeburg and Bamberg have gotten much needed rainfall, but not enough to move out of incipient.
- ii. Russell Cornette – Berkeley and Dorchester have gotten some rain, but not enough to move out. Keep at current status.
- iii. Jason Thompson agrees that there has been some improvement, but current conditions are still dry and to keep incipient. Some improvement in soil moisture and streamflow.
- iii. Motion: Keep all counties at status quo in incipient.
 - 1. Eric Odom, 1st
 - 2. Russell Cornette, 2nd
- vi. Motion passes unanimously.

IV. Closing Remarks

- a. Hope Mizzell (SCDNR) the discussion begins on next meeting date. April 9, 2026 selected for next DRC meeting.
- b. Farewell and thank you to Ken Rentier for leadership and dedication to SCDNR and Drought Response Committee.
- c. Ken Rentier (SCDNR) puts forth a motion to adjourn:
 - 1. Clint Elliott, 1st
 - 2. Jason Thompson, 2nd
- d. Meeting is adjourned at 11:17AM on March 5, 2026.

Committee Members	Group	Attendance 03/05/2026
West DMA		
Reg Williams	Agriculture	
Cheryl Daniels	Commission of Public Works	
Mark Warner	Counties	X
-	Domestic User	VACANT

David Evans	Industry	X
Lynn McEwen	Municipalities	X
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	
Ken Tuck	Commission of Public Works	X
Peggy Swearingen	Counties	X
Christy Jones	Domestic User	
Ed Holder	Industry	
James G. Bagley	Municipalities	X
Alan Stuart	Power Generation Facilities	X
Brad C. Powers	Private Water Supplier	
-	Public Service District	VACANT
Gregory Sprouse	Regional Council of Gov.	X
John T. Rivers	Soil and Water Conservation Dist.	
Fred Castles	Special Purpose District	X
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	X
Elbert Warren	Public Service District	X
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	
Jason Thompson	Commission of Public Works	X
-	Counties	VACANT
Chris Wallace	Domestic User	
-	Industry	VACANT
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.	
-	Special Purpose District	VACANT
State Agency Members		
Ken Rentiers	SCDNR, LWC Division	X
Jordan Van Delden	SC Emergency Management Divis.	X
Joe Koon	SC Dept. of Environ. Services	X
Darryl Jones	SC Forestry Commission	X
Sam Quinney	SC Department of Agriculture	
Other Participants		
Hope Mizzell	SCDNR, LWC Division	X
Melissa Griffin	SCDNR, LWC Division	X
Jennifer Simmons	SCDNR, LWC Division	X
Frank Strait	SCDNR, LWC Division	X
Joshua Palmer	NWS GSP	X
Tyler Brown	SCDNR	X
Sarah Coleman	USDA FSA	X
Valerie Jackson	SCFB	X
Leigh Monroe	SC DES	X
Scott Harder	SC DES	X
Alexis Modzelesky	SC DES	X

Rebecca Morris	SC DES	X
Elliot Wickham	NOAA/NIDIS	X
Gregory Sprouse		X
Glen Thomas	USDA FSA	X