

Drought Response Committee Conference Call

Date: September 24, 2025

Time: 10:10 a.m.

A Drought Response Committee Conference Call was conducted at 10:10 a.m., September 24, 2025. Notice of the date, time, and call-in information was posted and provided on the scdrought.com website.

Introduction

- a. Hope Mizzell (SCDNR) opens the meeting and reads the agenda. Quick change to Microsoft Teams.
 - i. Hope (SCDNR) makes notice that this meeting is being recorded.
- b. Hope Mizzell (SCDNR) conducts the Drought Committee roll call.
 - i. There are enough members present for quorum in all DMAs.
 - ii. She does a roll call of state agency members and any additions attendees.
 - iii. No media on the call.
- c. Hope Mizzell (SCDNR) puts forth a motion to approve the minutes of the last meeting, which took place on August 20th.
 - i. Jason Thompson, 1st
 - ii. Scott Willett, 2nd
 - iii. Motion passes unanimously. Minutes have been approved.

II. PowerPoint Presentation

- a. Hope Mizzell (SCDNR) begins with the presentation.
 - i. The drought conditions were downgraded in the previous call on August 20th.
 - ii. 30-day precipitation shows that we have been very dry in September and much below normal for entire state. 60-day and 90-day total rainfall still shows early August rainfall, especially in the Upstate
 - iii. Palmer Drought Severity Index shows some signs of drought and unusually moist, but no significant sign of drought.
 - iv. Crop Moisture Index – Only showing dry conditions from Columbia to coastline.
 - v. 30 SPI – picking up on dry signal without the early August rain. This has been a significant change since last meeting. Showing incipient to severe drought due to lack of 30-day rainfall.

- vi. Drought has been slowly creeping in the latest USDM last week. Introduced two areas of D1 in last week's USDM.
- vii. Clemson Tempest graphic showing the dry conditions as well – not many sites with more than 0.5 inch in the latest 30 days.
- viii. DMA rainfall – new range of rainfall graphic for each county. 30- and 60-day rainfall. 60-day totals pick up on heavy August rainfall. Southern showing the better rainfall totals – NEW state August precipitation record in Edisto Beach!

b. State Agency Reports

i. Alexis Modzelesky (DES) –

- 1. USGS 14-day percentiles. This month is showing a scattering of below normal across the state, with some still showing normal.
- 2. Streamflow table: Regulatory method column – no drought in SC, but in the at 14- and 28-days percentile columns showing incipient or moderate.
- 3. Gages across the state. In NE, gages are showing dryness with 3 out of 4 below their median. West – slightly below median. Central – 4 showing below normal. Southern – 2 showing dryness in stream gages.
- 4. Lake Level reservoirs – Most around target levels. Some decline, Jocassee plant in outage for two weeks, which is why there is a decline in Lake Level Deficit. Overall, reservoirs around target levels. Lake Hartwell – projection show will touch level 1 before rebound.
- 5. Groundwater – Some showing below normal and showing dryness. NE – Dillon well is showing downward trend and dryness. Central – Greenwell dry compared to last month. Just below. West DMA – around normal. Southern showing dry – below and much below normal.

ii. Darryl Jones (SC Forestry Commission) – A lot of stations in red level. Several are showing severe range for drought (based in their criteria).

- 1. KBDI – Not many fires despite latest weather conditions and high KBDI criteria. 48 fires across the state. Fuel moisture is high, but KBDI showing response to dry and evapotranspiration and heat. All but Sassafras Mountain showing no drought.
- 2. Scott Willett asks how to interpret to KBDI – Darryl states that due to elevation and size of land that the station represents. So, if one station gets tons of rain, but other portions don't

within thousands of acres, it shows. No station tells it all – more about trend and totality.

3. Hope Mizzell asks how far in time KBDI looks at rainfall – Darryl replies that 0.25” of rain does not change KBDI. Needs more according to Darryl. 30-45 days show cumulative. It’s dry, but even if we get normal rainfall, this tells us the top layer may be dry, but others overrule and keeps things better.

iii. Additional Input from State Agencies

1. Hope Mizzell (SCDNR) – Displays FSA/USDA map and reports, as well as CMOR and CoCoRaHS. Jennifer Simmons mentions that Allendale CMOR was selected as the CMOR of the week.
2. Sam Quinney (SCDA) – Late maturing peanuts seeing more disease and crops lost. Forage and pasture dry conditions across the state. Cool season forages lost too due to the lack of rain – some are holding off.
3. Joe Koon (DES) – No water supplier issues. Monitoring in northern Spartanburg. Nothing else to report.
4. Jordan Van Delden (SCEMD) - Nothing to report. Actively monitoring the tropics.

c. PowerPoint Presentation

- i. Hope Mizzell (SCDNR) displays weekly reports – Shows NHC latest outlook. Seven-day precipitation forecast would be beneficial. 6-to-10 day shows above normal temperatures with just above normal precipitation.
- ii. Josh Palmer (NWS GSP) elaborates on the chance for rain in our upcoming forecast. There is around a 50-70% chance for up to 1” of rain with a (20-30% chance) for 2”. Not showing significant rainfall across the state.
- iii. Hope Mizzell (SCDNR) – 3 month seasonal outlook: Statewide above normal temps with below normal precipitation in the upstate. The drought outlook shows drought in areas that D1 was put in latest USDM.

III. Open Discussion and Vote

Hope Mizzell (SCDNR):

a. West DMA

- i. Preston Pierce – Feels with hydrology levels and precipitation in forecast that our dryness now does not make it needed to be at drought level.
- ii. Yvonne Kling – Disagreed with Preston and feels we are in stage 1 due to agriculture conditions. Brian Chemsak and Lynn McEwen agreed due to impact on farming.
- iii. Sam Quinney (SC Dept. of Agriculture) – Farmers in Abbeville and McCormick are seeing significant impacts and very dry. Emphasizes we need to select things based on current conditions not in future forecast.
- iv. Mark Warner – Supports leaving McCormick County in normal status due to mostly timber not cattle and crops in the county.
- v. Scott Willett – Normally dry time and going into time of less ET, so incipient is not needed.
- vi. Motion: Move Aiken County to Beaufort County (Aiken, Barnwell, Allendale, Hampton, Jasper, Beaufort) into Incipient drought. Northern counties remain at normal status.
 1. Yvonne Kling, 1st.
 2. Scott Willett, 2nd
- vii. Motion passes unanimously.

b. Central DMA

- i. Fairfield very dry. Very spotty showers, if any. Fred Castles agrees that Chester moves to incipient due to very dry conditions
- ii. Ken Tuck – Several upstate counties abnormally, very dry. Seen in Chester, Spartanburg, York, Greenville.
- iii. Jimmy Bagley and Greg Sprouse support moving into incipient.
- iv. John Irwin – Laurens very dry. In support to move upstate into incipient.
- v. Motion: Move entire central DMA to incipient drought status.
 1. Jimmy Bagley, 1st
 2. Peggy Swearingen, 2nd
- vi. Motion passes unanimously.

c. Southern DMA

- i. Marion Rizer – Dorchester, Bamberg, and Orangeburg.

- ii. Jason Thompson - Incipient for all Southern DMA
- iii. Eric Odom – Agrees to Jason. Supports incipient for entire DMA.
- iv. Chris Wallace – Bamberg has been very dry and supports including all counties.
- v. Motion: Move entire Southern DMA into incipient drought status.
 - 1. Marion Rizer, 1st
 - 2. Jason Thompson, 2nd
- vi. Motion passes unanimously.

d. Northeast DMA

- i. Joe Ghent – In favor of Lancaster County moving into incipient. The conditions are very dry. In favor of all of northeast into incipient.
- ii. Nathan Ward – Agrees with Joe. Kershaw and Lee counties are very dry. Alan Watkins concurs with Nathan.
- iii. Motion: Move entire Northeast DMA into incipient drought status.
 - 1. Alan Watkins, 1st
 - 2. Joe Ghent, 2nd
- iv. Motion passes unanimously.

IV. Closing Remarks

- a. Hope Mizzell (SCDNR) suggests dates for a future meeting. The next meeting is scheduled to take place on October 7th. We may need to switch to meeting platform to Microsoft Teams in the future due to issues. We will be in touch with details about change.
- b. Hope Mizzell (SCDNR) puts forth a motion to adjourn:
 - i. Jimmy Bagley, 1st
 - ii. Joe Ghent, 2nd
- c. Meeting is adjourned at 11:27 a.m. on September 24, 2025.

Committee Members	Group	Attendance 09/24/2025
West DMA		
Reg Williams	Agriculture	
Cheryl Daniels	Commission of Public Works	X
Mark Warner	Counties	X
	Domestic User	VACANT

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.	X
Brian Chemsak	Special Purpose District	X
Central DMA		
John Irwin	Agriculture	X
Ken Tuck	Commission of Public Works	X
Peggy Swearingen	Counties	X
Christy Jones	Domestic User	X
Ed Holder	Industry	
James G. Bagley	Municipalities	X
Alan Stuart	Power Generation Facilities	
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	X
	Commission of Public Works	VACANT
Karolan Ohanesian	Domestic User	
Athena Strickland	Industry	
Clint Elliott	Municipality	
	Power Generation Facilities	VACANT
	Private Water Supplier	VACANT
Alan Watkins	Counties	X
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
Landrum Weathers	Agriculture	X
Jason Thompson	Commission of Public Works	X
	Counties	VACANT
Chris Wallace	Domestic User	X
	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.	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	X
Darryl Jones	SC Forestry Commission	X
Sam Quinney	SC Department of Agriculture	X
Hope Mizzell	SCDNR, LWC Division	X
Melissa Griffin	SCDNR, LWC Division	X
Jennifer Simmons	SCDNR, LWC Division	X
Josh Palmer	NWS GSP	X
Alexis Modzelesky	SC Dept. of Environ. Services	X
Kayla Stroman	SC FSA/USDA	X