



## N.C. Department of Environment and Natural Resources

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### Severe drought returns to Central North Carolina

**RALEIGH** – Below normal rainfall has again thrust parts of central North Carolina into severe drought, and water resources officials are encouraging communities to prepare should dry conditions persist.

“At this point, public water supplies are fine in North Carolina,” said Woody Yonts, chairman of the N.C. Drought Management Advisory Council. “But if dry conditions continue to occur, widespread impacts could quickly surface in the next few months as the temperatures begin to gradually increase and the growing season begins.”

Forty-five counties are experiencing drought in North Carolina, according to Thursday’s federal drought map. Of those, 27 Piedmont counties are in severe drought, the second worst level in the four-category system used to measure drought. Thursday marks the first time since September that any part of the Tar Heel State has experienced severe drought. The drought map can be seen at [www.ncdrought.org](http://www.ncdrought.org).

The introduction of severe drought is based on impacts to streamflows and the flow of rain water into reservoirs – two main factors used to determine drought categories. A lack of significant rainfall in recent months has resulted in below normal groundwater levels and streamflows and less water than needed to replenish reservoirs in parts of North Carolina.

To extend available water supplies and maintain lake levels, many reservoir managers in North Carolina are only allowing minimum releases of water. It’s unusual to take such action to maintain lake levels during the winter when rainfall typically recharges North Carolina’s reservoirs, state water resources officials said.

In addition to the areas experiencing drought, 38 mountain and eastern counties are abnormally dry, according to Thursday’s drought map. Abnormally dry is not a drought category, but means drought could emerge without adequate rainfall.

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