



N.C. Department of Environment and Natural Resources

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Impacts widespread as drought conditions now blanket most of North Carolina

RALEIGH – State officials are encouraging people to conserve water and avoid burning debris outdoors as high temperatures and below normal rains have thrust most of North Carolina into a drought.

Thursday's federal drought map shows that drought conditions now cover 74 counties, up from 30 counties last week. Moderate drought, the least serious form of drought, now covers 67 counties, including Mecklenburg, Forsyth, Guilford, New Hanover and Wake counties. Severe drought, the second worst of the four-category drought system, is covering seven counties in northeastern North Carolina. In addition, 26 North Carolina counties are abnormally dry, which means drought is not present but could return without sufficient rainfall.

For a more detailed report, check out the state's official drought map at www.ncdrought.org.

"We encourage people to conserve water whenever possible, but discourage people from burning outdoors – at least until we receive sufficient rainfall," said Dee Freeman, secretary of the N.C. Department of Environment and Natural Resources. "Many North Carolinians are familiar with the historic drought of just a few years ago and know why it's important to be cautious at a time like this."

The spreading drought conditions are a reflection that below normal rainfall is starting to have significant impacts on streamflows, lakes, reservoirs and soil moisture, said Woody Yonts, director of the N.C. Drought Management Advisory Council.

Some public water systems are responding by instituting water conservation measures. Due to drought-related causes, 160 water systems have in place voluntary water conservation measures while 86 systems have instituted mandatory water conservation restrictions. For tips on how to save water, go to www.savewaternc.org.

During the past month, the dry conditions have also sparked a steady increase in the number of wildfires and prompted an early start to fall fire season. The N.C. Division of Forest Resources has recorded about 3,063 wildfires, which is 120 more wildfires than the state had recorded through this time last year.

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