



N.C. Department of Environment and Natural Resources

Release: Immediate
Date: Aug. 21, 2009

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Drought Emerges Again in North Carolina

RALEIGH – Drought conditions have reemerged in parts of North Carolina for the first time since early May.

A lack of rainfall thrust seven central North Carolina counties from abnormally dry conditions into moderate drought, according to Thursday's map released by the U.S. Drought Monitor. It is the first time since May 5 that any part of the Tar Heel State has experienced drought. The map can be found at www.ncdrought.org.

"We're certainly not out of the woods," said Dee Freeman, secretary of the N.C. Department of Environment and Natural Resources. "All North Carolinians need to conserve water whenever possible. One of the best ways to reduce the effects of any drought or dry conditions is by making water conservation part of your daily routine."

At least some part of North Carolina had experienced drought for a two-year period until May 12. That's when significant rainfall replenished streams, reservoirs and groundwater supplies and moved the only remaining counties experiencing moderate drought into the abnormally dry category. From best-to-worst, the drought categories are: moderate, severe, extreme and exceptional. Abnormally dry indicates drought is not present but could return if dry conditions persist.

Abnormally dry conditions spread into the Charlotte area this week. However, the news was not bad for all North Carolina counties, as conditions in northeastern North Carolina improved from abnormally dry to normal. As of Thursday, 67 counties – three fewer than last week – are experiencing abnormally dry conditions while 26 counties are experiencing normal conditions for this time of year. The seven counties in moderate drought are Alamance, Chatham, Durham, Guilford, Lee, Orange and Randolph.

The drought of 2007-08 was the worst in North Carolina since recordkeeping began on the subject in 1895. The drought started Feb. 13, 2007, creeping from the mountains to the coast as a lack of rainfall depleted streamflows and reservoirs to record low levels. The drought prompted many towns to enact mandatory and voluntary water conservation restrictions and helped bring about a state law that makes state and local officials better prepared to respond to future droughts.

Many people in North Carolina are still subject to water conservation restrictions. More than 3.72 million people in North Carolina, or 52 percent of the people who receive water from public systems the state tracks, are under mandatory or voluntary water use restrictions.

During the record-breaking drought, the state launched a Web site on simple ways businesses, residents and others can conserve water. To learn more about water conservation steps, please check out www.savewaternc.org.

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