



N.C. Department of Environment and Natural Resources

Release: Immediate
Date: May 14, 2009

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No Drought in North Carolina for First Time in Two Years

RALEIGH – For the first time in more than two years, no part of North Carolina is experiencing drought.

Thursday's federal drought map shows that widespread rainfall in recent weeks brought improvements throughout North Carolina, most notably in 14 mountain counties that had been the state's only area experiencing drought. Fifty-three counties on opposite ends of the state remain abnormally dry, which means an area could return to drought without adequate rainfall.

"Certainly, we're encouraged by the rainfall we've seen recently," said Dee Freeman, secretary of the N.C. Department of Environment and Natural Resources. "But it's safe to say we're cautiously optimistic about what this means for the weeks and months ahead. There's no reason people should not try to conserve water whenever possible."

"In the abnormally dry areas, a number of water table wells are below normal levels for this time of year. There is still the possibility that dry conditions can return, and we could have impacts from drought this summer."

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.

In recent months, above average rainfall amounts have helped move much of North Carolina from a drought. That rainfall has created widespread improvements. Forty-seven North Carolina counties – up from 36 counties last week – are facing normal conditions for this time of year, according to Thursday's drought map.

Nevertheless, many North Carolina community water systems have left voluntary and mandatory water restrictions in place. Statewide, 3.94 million people, or 55 percent of the people who receive water from systems the N.C. Division of Water Resources tracks, are under mandatory or voluntary water use restrictions.

Drought conditions in North Carolina are updated weekly. The N.C. Drought Management Advisory Council, a group of experts on climate, weather, geology, water supply, forestry and agriculture, meet via conference call each week to discuss the impact of rainfall on streams, groundwater, reservoirs, wildfire activity and crops. Based on that discussion, the council makes a recommendation to the U.S. Drought Monitor about how the state's drought map should look that week. The U.S. Drought Monitor uses the state's recommendation when it releases the final drought map each Thursday. To see or download a copy of the drought map, go to the state's official drought Web site, www.ncdrought.org.

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