SOUTH CAROLINA DROUGHT TABLETOP EXERCISE

SC EMERGENCY OPERATIONS CENTER
WEST COLUMBIA, SC
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Current Policies and Practice

South Carolina has experienced several droughts over the past two decades, highlighting the need for multiple agencies and organizations to work together to effectively manage water resources during these events. Formal plans and processes are important tools for water managers and users as they monitor, conserve, and manage water resources during drought events.

- The South Carolina Drought Response Act and Regulations establish the procedures through which the State monitors and responds at the incipient, moderate, severe, and extreme drought alert phases.
- The South Carolina Drought Response Plan, located in Appendix 10 of the State's Emergency Operations Plan, describes actions that occur when water shortages are imminent and conditions reach a severity level beyond the scope of local communities.

The 2019 Tabletop Exercise

92 participants, representing the **South** Carolina Drought Response Committee and 48 different organizations, walked through a series of scenarios and reviewed the plans that govern the State's drought response.

OBJECTIVES

- 1. Exercise the SC drought monitoring and response process
- 2. Identify gaps in existing processes and prioritze follow up actions
- 3. Increase awareness of participants' roles and responsibilities for drought response and planning

Participants reviewed the agricultural, fire, and water resource impacts that occur at each drought stage, discussed the effectiveness of South Carolina's response and preparedness, and identified areas for improvement. Breakout groups, organized by South Carolina's **Drought Management Areas**, facilitated more focused discussions and networking.

PARTICIPANT FEEDBACK

 The breakout sessions were very helpful and allowed representatives from all backgrounds to talk and interact.



- This being my first year on the [Drought Response]
 Committee and my first year attending the exercise,
 the best thing I learned was the basic structure of the
 different organizations and put faces with names
 which is still important even in the digital world we
 live.
- One of the most interesting takeaways was the difference in timing of drought impacts for agriculture vs. drinking water and industry.
- The resources and points of contact available were invaluable. Will note these in our plan. Documented several improvements to incorporate into our plan revise triggers and communication templates to customers.

PARTICIPATING ORGANIZATIONS

- Aiken County Emergency Management Division
- American Red Cross
- Anderson Regional Joint Water System
- Betty Allen Farms
- Carolinas Integrated Sciences & Assessments
- Catawba River Water Supply Project
- Central Midlands Council of Governments
- · Charleston Water System
- Chester Metropolitan District
- City of Rock Hill
- Clemson Extension Service
- · Congaree Riverkeeper
- Dominion Energy South Carolina, Inc.
- Domtar Paper
- Duke Energy
- Edisto Concerns
- Edisto Engineers and Surveyors
- Friends of the Edisto
- Grand Strand Water & Sewer Authority
- Greenville Water
- Laurens County Water & Sewer Commission
- Lexington County Emergency Management Division
- Milliken & Company
- Mount Pleasant Waterworks
- National Weather Service, Charleston
- National Weather Service, Columbia
- National Weather Service, Greenville-Spartanburg
- National Weather Service, Wilmington
- National Integrated Drought Information System
- Orangeburg Department of Public Utilities
- Powdersville Water
- Saluda County Emergency Management Division
- Santee Cooper
- SC Department of Agriculture
- SC Department of Health & Environmental Control
- SC Department of Natural Resources
- SC Department of Social Services
- SC Emergency Management Division
- SC Farm Bureau Federation
- SC Forestry Commission
- SC National Guard
- SC Rural Water Association
- SC Water Resources Center, Clemson University
- SCAWWA/WEASC
- Spartanburg Water
- State Climate Office of North Carolina
- The Salvation Army-North & South Carolina
- US Army Corps of Engineers
- USDA Farm Service Agency
- USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service
- USGS South Atlantic Water Science Center

KEY CHALLENGES, NEEDS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS IDENTIFIED AT THE EXERCISE



Communications

Identified Need

 Improved information sharing with the public and between different government levels and sectors

Recommendations

- Earlier and more consistent messaging to the public
- Enhance mechanisms and resources to support two-way communications between the Drought Response Committee and affected sectors

Plans & Procedures

Identified Need

 Better coordinated response actions and communications between organizations

Recommendations

- Fill Drought Response Committee vacancies
- Review and update the State
 Drought Response Act and local plans

Education & Awareness

Identified Need

 Greater agency and public understanding of drought

Recommendations

- Publicize the scdrought.com website
- Develop new drought information resources, particularly for audiences not represented at the tabletop exercise

Data & Information

Identified Need

 More reliable and regularly collected data about impacts

Recommendation

 Build on currently available tools so Drought Response Committee members and other decision makers have the data and information they need to monitor drought conditions





