

Potential Impacts of Severe Drought on Drinking Water Availability

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency calls droughts “slow-moving disasters” because they take time to develop and occur over a long timeframe. Severe or extended drought can reduce drinking water supplies, affecting both public water systems and private wells that rely on groundwater or surface water. Because drought prevents water sources from being naturally replenished, the availability and reliability of these supplies can decline.

S.C. Drought Response Committee

The S.C. Drought Response Committee (DRC) consists of state and local members and governs drought-related issues and response in South Carolina. The DRC is chaired and supported by the S.C. Department of Natural Resources and the S.C. State Climatology Office. The S.C. Department of Environmental Services (SCDES) is one of the state agency members of the DRC.

During severe or extreme drought, the DRC determines nonessential water use and issues declaration for water curtailment. The DRC designates counties as having Normal, Incipient, Modern, Severe or Extreme levels of drought.

Find current S.C. Drought Response Committee information and the latest county drought statuses at scdrought.com.

Public Water Systems Impacts

As the 2026 drought continues, SCDES is staying in routine contact with public water systems to assess impacts. Public water providers across the state have been making efforts to help conserve water during the current drought by implementing mandatory water restrictions or requesting voluntary water conservation. ***It's advised to contact your water supplier for the latest water restriction information.***

Well Water Impacts

If a residential well goes dry, SCDES recommends contacting a licensed well driller for assistance. Several options may help:

- If deeper groundwater is available, your well driller may be able to lower the pump further into the well.
- If your drilled rock well has little or no water, the driller may attempt to deepen the existing well. However, there is no guarantee that water will be found at a deeper depth. If deeper water is not available, drilling a new well in another location or connecting to a public water system may be necessary.
- If deepening the well is not possible or cost-effective, the driller may recommend drilling a completely new, deeper well on your property. In some cases, drilling a new well may be more affordable than modifying the existing one.
- If an entire neighborhood or community is affected, residents may consider developing a permanent community public well.
- If available in your area, you may be able to permanently connect to a public water system.

Visit des.sc.gov/2026drought for additional information from SCDES.

Resources for Private Well Owners Impacted by the Current 2026 Drought

SCDES is aware of private drinking wells that are impacted by the current drought. We encourage well owners to report dry private wells to the agency by calling **SCDES's Private Well Hotline: 1-888-761-5989**. Additional resources include:

- Water Well Trust (WWT) is a 501(c)3 organization created by the Water Systems Council to provide families with access to clean drinking water: waterwelltrust.org
- Community volunteer organizations may be available as a temporary source of drinking water.