



## Water Planning in South Carolina

*Preserving and managing the state's water resources for all South Carolinians, present and future*

Water is a critical, but limited, natural resource and is a major priority for environmental protection and economic development. Because water is a basic life necessity and a shared resource, it's important for states to have carefully developed water management plans that are built upon the knowledge, expertise and input of multiple stakeholder groups who work collaboratively, using the latest science and data. Water management plans should reflect the best interests of the entire state.



### **Water planning in South Carolina**

South Carolina's recent record-breaking economic development and population growth paired with periods of drought over the past several decades illustrate how essential it is to properly manage the state's ground water and surface water resources for the benefit of all South Carolinians, now and in the future.

A State Water Plan was first developed by the S.C. Department of Natural Resources (SCDNR) in 1998 as a guide for managing

South Carolina's surface and ground water. In the middle of 1998, South Carolina experienced one of its worst droughts in history, which lasted until late 2002. The second edition of the State Water Plan was published in 2004 and incorporated updated management strategies based on the lessons learned from that extensive drought period. Several of those strategies remain in place today.

In 2019, SCDNR published the South Carolina State Water Planning Framework under the guidance of the Planning Process Advisory Committee (PPAC). The Planning Framework developed regional water plans, now formally called River Basin Plans, for eight planning basins in the state: Broad, Catawba, Edisto, Lower Savannah-Salkehatchie, Pee Dee, Saluda, Santee, and Upper Savannah. These regional water plans will provide important water management data for WaterSC to build upon.

### **Establishment of WaterSC**

On Sept. 24, 2024, Governor Henry McMaster issued Executive Order 2024-22, establishing the WaterSC Water Resources Working Group. WaterSC is charged with working across state agencies and with key stakeholders to develop a state water plan that balances South Carolina's economic and environmental interests to ensure the long-term protection of the state's water resources.

WaterSC is led by the S.C. Department of Environmental Services (SCDES) with the agency's interim director, Myra Reece, serving as Chair. *Ex officio* participants include Ben Duncan, Director, S.C. Office of Resilience; Hugh Weathers, Commissioner, S.C. Department of Agriculture; Duane Parrish, Director, S.C. Department of Parks, Recreation & Tourism; Robert Boyles, Jr., Director, S.C. Department of Natural Resources; and Harry Lightsey, Secretary, S.C. Department of Commerce.

SCDES was directed to designate up to 25 additional participants from among the following sectors and categories: academia; public water suppliers; conservation, water and land; agriculture; forestry; industry; energy; tourism and hospitality; historic preservation; and individuals with relevant professional expertise. The WaterSC Working Group Participants are listed by the sector they represent at [des.sc.gov/WaterSC](https://des.sc.gov/WaterSC).

### The charge of WaterSC

The goal and purpose of WaterSC is to:

- balance the State's economic, environmental and social needs
- ensure the reliability, resiliency, sustainability, and sufficiency of the State's water resources for all existing and future uses, while simultaneously protecting the environment
- support and facilitate additional collaboration with ongoing efforts and existing initiatives



By Jan. 31, 2025, WaterSC will provide a report to the General Assembly's Surface Water Study Committee informing the committee of the current state of surface water in South Carolina and recommending changes to current laws to ensure sustainable surface water withdrawal practices.

WaterSC also will advise SCDES regarding the comprehensive water resources policy for the state so that SCDES may issue an updated State Water Plan on or before Dec. 31, 2025. WaterSC will inform SCDES concerning recommendations regarding any changes in law or regulation that may be required to implement the updated State Water Plan, including any changes related to the use and control of surface water and groundwater.

### Public engagement is essential to WaterSC

South Carolinians are asked to be active participants in WaterSC's water planning efforts by watching meetings, reading the WaterSC Stakeholder Engagement Plan, and providing comments by emailing [WaterSC@des.sc.gov](mailto:WaterSC@des.sc.gov) or using the online form at [des.sc.gov/WaterSC](https://des.sc.gov/WaterSC).

The public is encouraged to regularly visit [des.sc.gov/WaterSC](https://des.sc.gov/WaterSC) and follow the hashtag [#WaterSC](https://twitter.com/WaterSC) on social media to learn about the latest updates.