Arthur may blow pleasant weather Upstate's way

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Tropical Storm Arthur's northward march along the Atlantic Coast put North Carolina's entire eastern seaboard under a tropical storm warning and South Carolina's Grand Strand under a tropical storm watch, as the National Weather Service's Hurricane Prediction Center forecast the strengthening storm to become a hurricane today.

Some of North Carolina's coastal regions were already under a hurricane watch late Wednesday as the storm made its way north where it is forecast to brush the Outer Banks today before it heads up the East Coast and out to sea overnight.

The storm — which may strengthen into a Category 1 hurricane — will likely bring heavy rain as well as gusty winds and ocean rip currents to the coast of both Carolinas prior to the Fourth of July weekend.

But Arthur's effect on the Upstate's holiday weekend weather couldn't be better, said Neil Dix-

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on, meteorologist at the weather service station in Greer.

As the storm moves up the Carolina coast, it will draw a cold front across the Carolinas followed by an air mass moving in from Canada that will create sunny skies and slightly cooler temperatures throughout the weekend, Dixon said.

"It's going to be a fantastic holiday weekend across the western Carolinas," Dixon said.

Temperatures will peak in the upper 80s on Independence Day and throughout the weekend with sunny skies and low relative humidity, he said.

Hurricane models show the track will continue out to sea with no threat of veering toward the South Carolina coast or inland, Dixon said.

South Carolina's coast will see its worst weather during the day Thursday, though the storm's center should remain off to the east, he said.

The storm's impact on North Carolina could include coastal flooding along the sounds and rivers and dangerous surf that could erode beaches, the weather service said. It may also produce isolated tornadoes.

Gov. Pat McCrory declared a state of emergency for 25 coastal North Carolina counties ahead of the storm. Arthur is headed toward the same 200-mile stretch of Outer Banks that weathered hurricanes Irene in 2011 and Isabel in 2003.

By Friday, the weather should clear out with sunny skies and highs in the 80s, the weather service forecast.