

Drought ends on SC's south coast, rain helping elsewhere

BRUCE SMITH

ASSOCIATED PRESS

CHARLESTON — Rain in recent months that has totaled almost 2 feet in some places has ended the drought along South Carolina's south coast. And state and local officials say that rains in recent days should also help ease the grip of the drought elsewhere in the state.

The South Carolina Drought Response Committee removed Charleston, Jasper and Beaufort counties from drought status during its meeting late last week. All other areas of the state still remain in the lowest level of drought, an incipient drought, or in moderate drought.

Some areas of Charleston County have received 16 inches of rain in the past two months. Daufuskie Island on the state's southern tip received more than 23 inches.

Following weekend rains across the state, the committee meets again next week to re-evaluate the drought status of other counties.

Columbia has received more than 6 inches of rain since the first of the month, about half of that coming during the past week, according to the National Weather Service.

In the past week, Spartanburg has received just over 3 inches of rain while Greer received about 2-and-a-half inches, according to the Southeast Regional Climate Center. The forecast calls for up to an inch of rain in some areas of the state during the next several days.

Back on July 26, the drought committee had designated all counties in the state as either in incipient or moderate droughts.

While the rain is coming now, it's too late for this year's crops for many farmers in the state. Earlier this month, 35 of the state's 46 counties were designated primary natural disaster areas by the U.S. Department of Agriculture for losses because of the heat and drought that began last spring.

The designation makes farmers eligible for low-interest loans to help offset losses that might not be covered by crop insurance.