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Rain arriving, but drought here first

By Jennifer Crossley Howard

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ANDERSON COUNTY — After a scarcity of rain for much of October, rain is finally forecast for the Upstate, but isn't expected to relieve a slight drought.

The National Drought Mitigation Center released an abnormally dry drought report for the Upstate and southwest corner of North Carolina on Thursday. The southeast corner of Anderson County is in a moderate drought, said Pat Tanner, a hydrologist at the National Weather Service in Greer.

A combination of factors has led to the drought, including lack of rainfall, falling river levels and a lack of crop moisture.

"Right now about three quarters of Anderson is abnormally dry," Tanner said.

There's a 90 percent chance of thunderstorms Monday, but they should not be severe, he said. A 20 percent or higher chance of rain is forecast through Thursday, which is supposed to be partly sunny.

The low for Monday and Tuesday is 63 degrees. The low drops throughout the week to 60 on Wednesday and 48 on Thursday. Monday's high should reach 72 degrees and climb to 79 degrees Wednesday and Thursday.

Only 0.13 inches of rain have fallen in October — 2.28 inches below normal for the month, and rainfall Monday and Tuesday looks minimal. It should stop the drought from getting worse, but probably won't end it.

"We're probably only going to get half an inch, if we're lucky, maybe an inch," Tanner said.

The Blue Ridge Mountains in the Upstate need about 7 inches more rain.

The water level of Anderson's biggest body of water, Hartwell Lake, dropped to 654.83 feet Sunday, according to the U.S. Army Corp. of Engineers. Lake Jocassee sits at 83.9 feet, 15 feet below its target level, according to Duke Energy reports recorded on Sunday. Lake Keowee is closest to its target level of 99 feet; it sits at 96 feet.

Rain is a tricky thing when planning fall crops, Tanner said.

"A lot of times it depends. ... If you get too much rain you can't get into the field and it gets moldy and too much moisture," he said.

The drought has affected cotton and soybean crops the most, Tanner said.