

Southeast working with persistent drought

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MODOC, S.C. — The persistent drought across the Southeast forced Ashley Ertle to put his dock on wheels.

The 45-year-old homeowner on Strom Thurmond Lake spent a couple of thousand dollars to be able to extend his dock several dozen feet because the water always seems to be below normal these days.

"I decided I was going to have to chase the lake if I was going to enjoy it," said Ertle, whose home is on the lake along the South Carolina-Georgia state

line. His grandfather bought the land for \$500 in the 1950s when lake was built.

A drought has again parked over South Carolina, marking the ninth year in the last 11 that some part of the state has unusually dry weather. It's a similar story in many areas of the Southeast.

Some part of the region has been in a severe drought since the summer of 2010, and the dry weather worries farmers, boaters and municipal water works that depend heavily on rivers and streams that feed lakes and reservoirs. Some hope the tropical storm that has soaked parts

of Georgia and Florida will help a little.

Some researchers say forecasting weather patterns is good enough to more carefully control how much water goes into and out of the dozens of lakes controlled by dams created six decades ago. The water released from the dams is critical because it is often arbitrary, based on decades of averages, rather than of hour-by-hour monitoring that is possible with today's technology.

Researchers also say farmers should adopt systems that put just the right amount of water in the right place at the right time.