LOCAL NEWS

Upstate back in drought

Dry July, August lead to declaration

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The state's Drought Response committee placed the Upstate back in drought status Wednesday, less than three months after drought had been declared over.

A return to a pattern of much-below-normal rainfall over the past two months resulted in a declaration of incipient drought for 22 counties, including all of the Upstate, according to the state Climatologist's Office.

"We were optimistic in early June that maybe we would finally get an extended break from the drought, but only two months have passed since we removed the drought declaration and here we go again," said Hope Mizzell, state climatologist.

Incipient drought is the first level of drought. The Upstate reached extreme drought, the fourth most severe category, last winter.

Spring and early summer rains brought relief, and drought was officially declared at an end on June 10. It was the first time since August 2006 that no part of the state was in drought status.

The Greenville-Spartanburg area recorded its fourth-driest July and August on record since 1893, receiving 2.99 inches of rain, said William Schmitz, of the NOAA-Southeast Regional Climate Center.

Lake Hartwell was 6 feet below full pond Wednesday, according to Army Corps of Engineers data. Lake Keowee was 4 feet below full pond and Lake Jocassee was 17 feet below full pond, according to Duke Energy data.

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