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Weather Service: Most of Pickens County no longer in drought

by Sandy Foster
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State also out of the woods

PICKENS COUNTY - The drought is over for most of Pickens County and the rest of the state, according to meteorologists.

Last Thursday alone, most areas of Pickens County got 2 to 2.5 inches of rain, and that was on top of the significant rainfalls in May, according to meteorologist Neil Dixon with the National Weather Service.

Since May 1, 7 to 11 inches of rain of rain has fallen in the county, with the heaviest in the Nine Times are and the least around Easley, he said.

The extreme northern portions of the county, near the mountains, are the only areas still in a slight deficit, classified at the lowest level of drought of "abnormally dry," Dixon said.

That's good news for everyone, particularly farmers and water providers.

"It's been marvelous," said Walker Miller, owner of the Happy Berry in Six Mile.

Miller said this is the first time in 13 years his farm, which produces blueberries, blackberries and grapes, will enjoy a normal summer.

"The plants are glowing with green," he said.

He also said cattle in the county are "getting fat and sleek."

According to Dennis Chastain, who represents the area on the state Drought Response Committee, cattle farms had a good first cutting in May and should enjoy a second one in August.

And he said the reason for the end of the dry snap is that La Nina off the coast of California has completely dissipated. That weather pattern caused the drought, he said.

Chastain also said none of the climate predictors are expecting drought conditions this summer.

"Even if we don't get much rain, we have enough ground water supplies," he said.

The naturalist said that for the first time in 10 years, he saw a wet weather spring up in his garden.

That happens when the ground water is recharged enough to build pressure up, which causes the water to start bubbling out of the ground.

Chastain said that along with Pickens County, the rest of the state is also out of the woods, and the drought committee is expected to take a formal electronic vote Tuesday.

The lakes, while in much better shape, still have some recuperating to do, he added.

Lake Jocassee is still the lowest, at 4.1 feet below pond, and Lake Hartwell is 2.5 feet below normal. And Lake Keowee is 3.4 feet below target pond, according to Duke Energy.

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