

# North Carolina Drought Update

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Drought Management Advisory Council  
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 NC STATE  
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For the assessment period ending **Jan. 6, 2026**  
*From the US Drought Monitor, with input from the NC DMAC*

## The Main Takeaway

A dry ending to 2025 and beginning of 2026 have led to further expansion of Moderate Drought (D1) and Severe Drought (D2) across more than 83% of North Carolina.

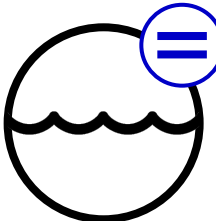
## This Week's Summary

The holidays came and went without significant rainfall, leaving most of the state in drought as we begin 2026. While our current dry spell began in mid-August, the dryness ramped up in November. Aside from some showers in coastal areas in early December, we've seen limited precipitation over the past 2 months, including less than 2.5 inches across central and western NC.

## The Current Impacts

Statewide, streamflow levels have fallen much below normal, topsoils are drying out even in shaded areas, and many winter crops are stunted and struggling.

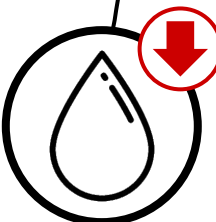
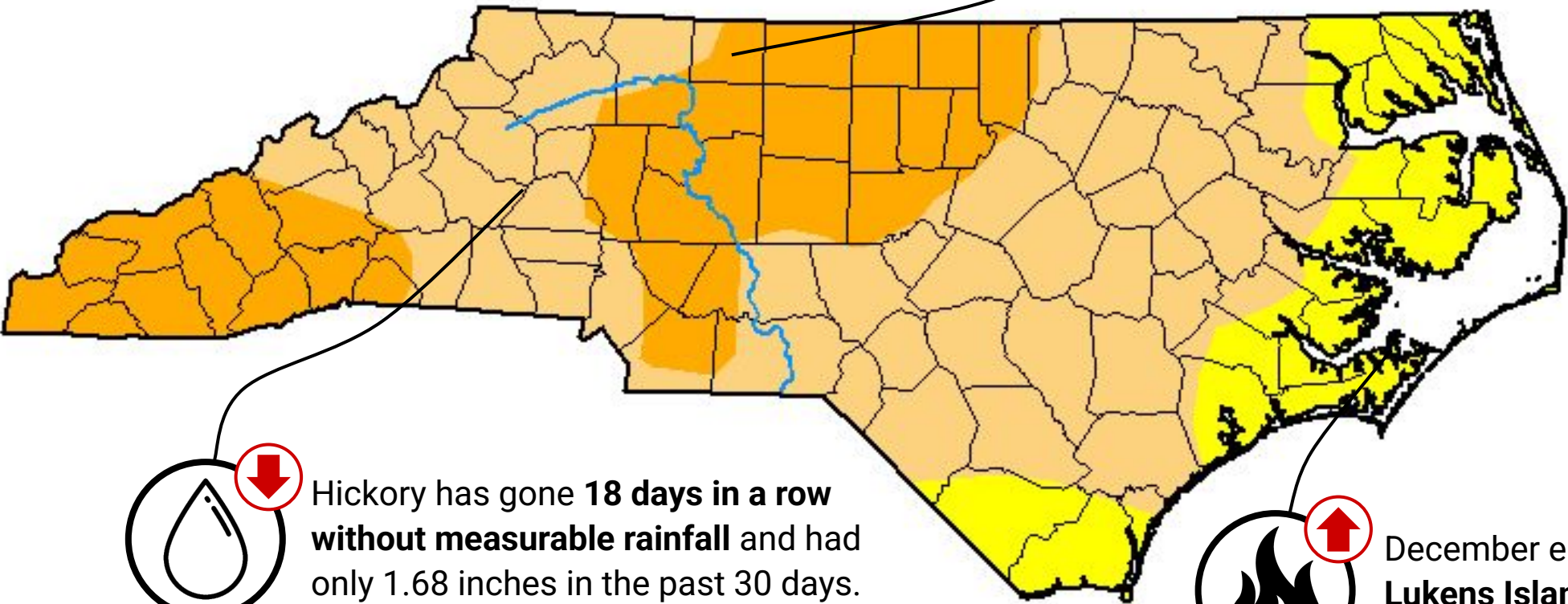
For your local drought status, visit [www.ncdrought.org](http://www.ncdrought.org)



Duke Energy and TVA are **holding western reservoirs higher than their normal winter targets** in case ongoing drought makes refilling them more difficult this spring.



Stokes County Extension reports **leaf wilt and stunted growth affecting cereal grains**.

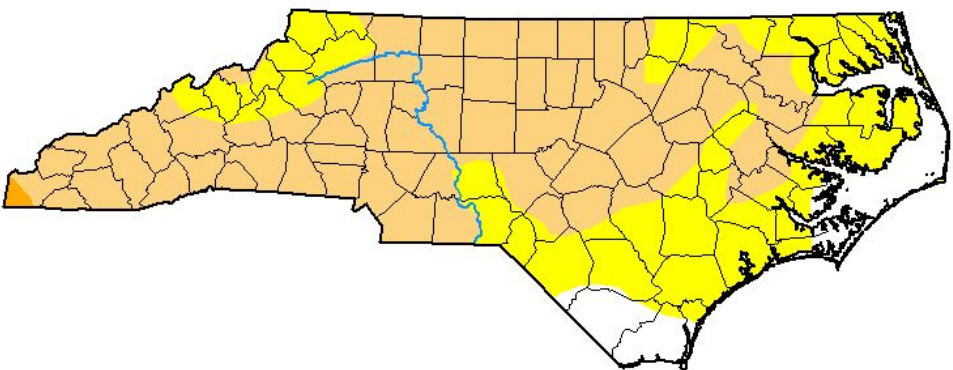


Hickory has gone **18 days in a row without measurable rainfall** and had only 1.68 inches in the past 30 days.



December ended with the **370-acre Lukens Island wildfire**, which started following an escaped debris burn.

## Last Week's Drought Status



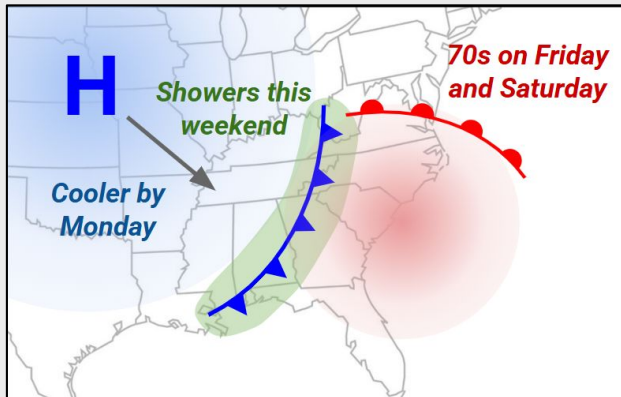
## Statewide Coverage by Category

Category	Current Coverage	Change Since Last Week
D0: Abnormally Dry	16.56%	-18.51%
D1: Moderate Drought	54.60%	-5.04%
D2: Severe Drought	28.84%	+28.53%
D3: Extreme Drought	0.00%	0.00%
D4: Exceptional Drought	0.00%	0.00%

# Short-Range Outlook for North Carolina

## Week 1:

January 8 to 14, 2026



### Cooler After Sunday



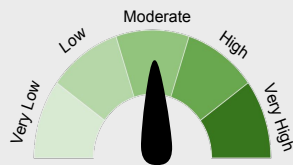
A warm front moving through on Friday will push our temperatures into the low 70s, but that warmth will be short-lived. A cold front will sweep through on Saturday night, and cooler air building in behind it will limit high temperatures to the 40s on Monday.

### Wet This Weekend



Rain along the cold front will begin in the Mountains by Friday night and in the Piedmont on Saturday, with lingering showers crossing the Coastal Plain early Sunday. Totals should range from 2 inches or more in the far west to a half-inch or less in eastern NC.

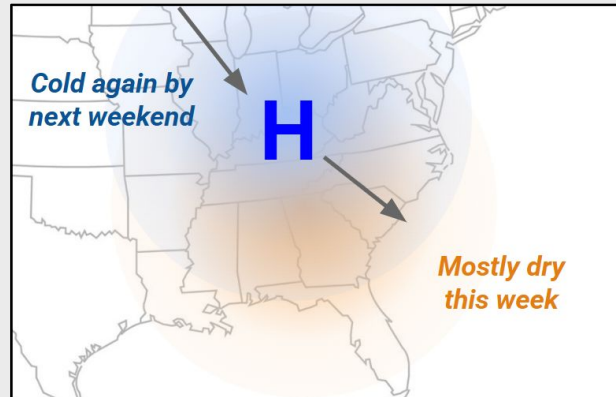
### Forecast Confidence



There's some uncertainty about the timing of rainfall along the front, but models have been coming into better agreement recently.

## Week 2:

January 15 to 21, 2026

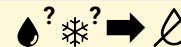


### Another Cold Blast Coming



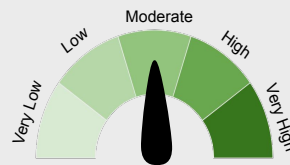
A reinforcing shot of Arctic air should arrive early this week, with colder-than-normal temperatures entering next weekend. After that, forecasts are less certain, with some showing another round of cold weather while others bring a late-week warm-up.

### Another Dry Winter Week



Some forecasts show a chance of scattered rain or snow showers at the start of the week ahead of the Arctic air mass. Once that cold high pressure system builds in over us, it should cut off any precipitation chances, especially if temperatures remain cooler.

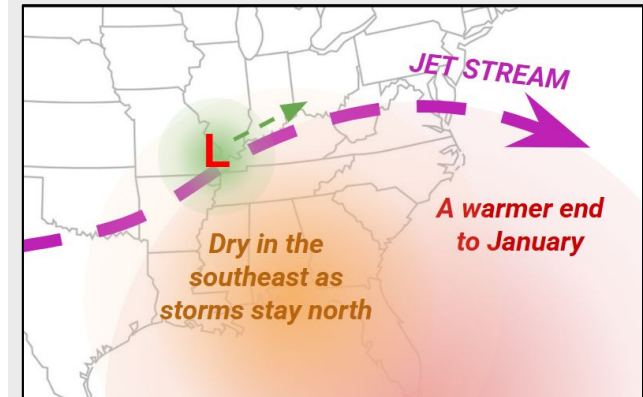
### Forecast Confidence



Confidence is higher in the cooldown early this week and lower later on due to differing forecasts about our temperature pattern.

## Weeks 3-4:

Jan. 22 to Feb. 4, 2026



### Likely Turning Warmer



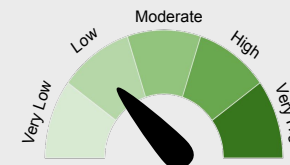
By late January, the large-scale pattern should see the jet stream – the boundary between warm and cool air – shifting north of us. That should keep us mostly warmer than normal, although any southward dips of the jet stream could bring brief cooldowns.

### Probably Drier, Too



With the jet stream positioned to just our north, most weather systems are likely to bypass us, keeping us in a drier pattern through early February. However, even a small southward shift in the storm track could offer better precipitation chances at times.

### Forecast Confidence



The uncertainty is largely tied to small changes in the jet stream position, which could affect our chances of any cool or wet weather.