

# North Carolina Drought Update

Created By:

North Carolina Drought Management Advisory Council

NORTH CAROLINA CLIMATE OFFICE

NC STATE

[www.ncdrought.org](http://www.ncdrought.org)

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For the assessment period ending **Mar. 3, 2026**  
 From the US Drought Monitor, with input from the NC DMAC

## The Main Takeaway

Parts of central and eastern North Carolina improved back to Moderate Drought (D1) as the past week's rainfall has finally alleviated some ongoing impacts.

## The Good News

Even small improvements are worth celebrating as a sign that our recent rainfall has made a difference. Major reservoirs have risen several feet back to (or just above) their targets ahead of the impending increase to summer pond levels, while moisture levels in streams and soils are also recovering after repeated rain events.

## The Bad News

In the past six months, we're still 6 to 12 inches below normal statewide, and those deficits didn't change much in February. As spring begins, warmer weather will mean more evaporation and higher fire danger.

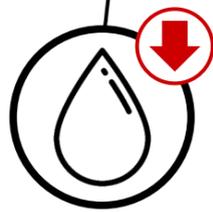
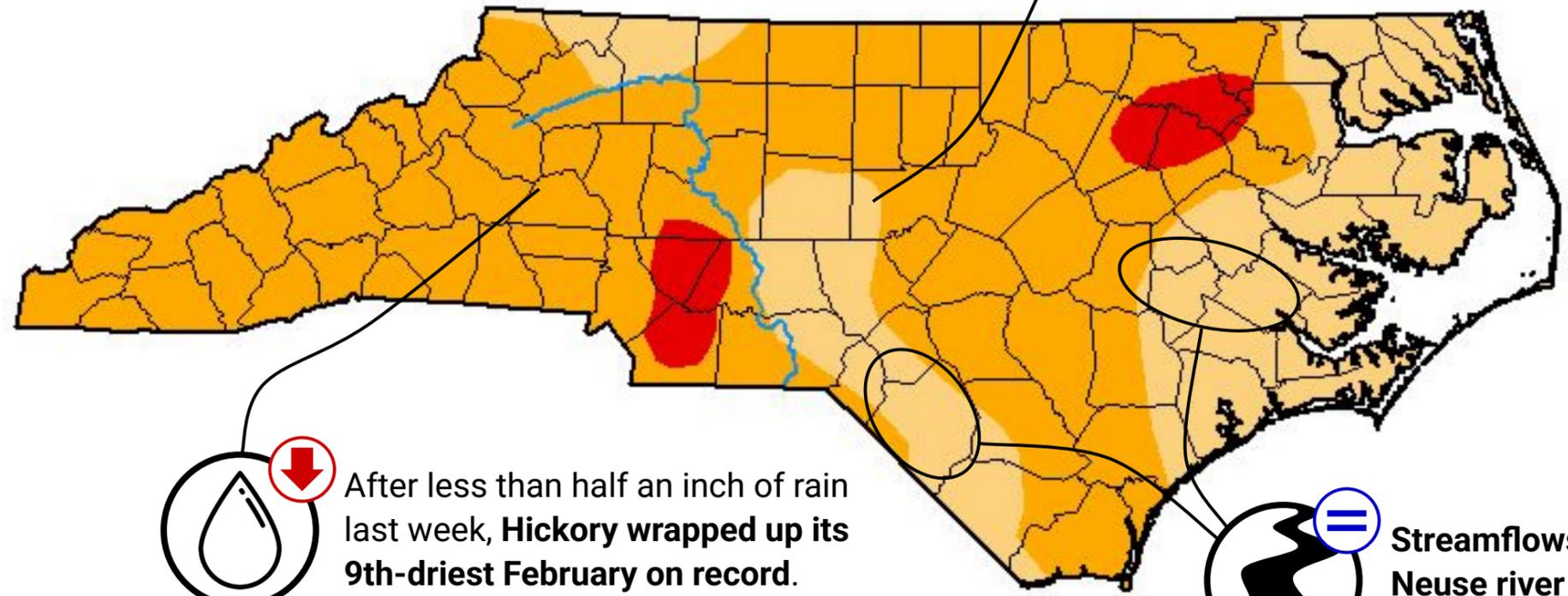
For your local drought status, visit [www.ncdrought.org](http://www.ncdrought.org)



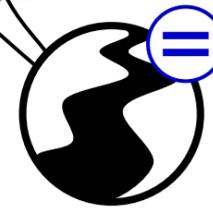
Per USDA/NASS, only **15% of topsoil moisture is short or very short** (down from 40% on Feb. 1), but **57% of pastures are in poor or very poor condition.**



As of last Friday, **Siler City is no longer requesting voluntary water conservation** since its reservoirs have risen back above 70% of their capacity.

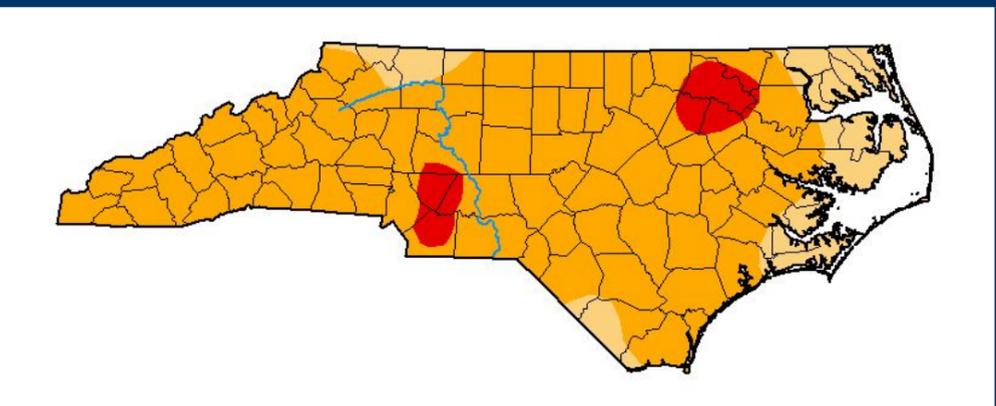


After less than half an inch of rain last week, **Hickory wrapped up its 9th-driest February on record.**



Streamflows in the **Lumber and Neuse river basins have held near normal** since last week's rain event.

## Last Week's Drought Status



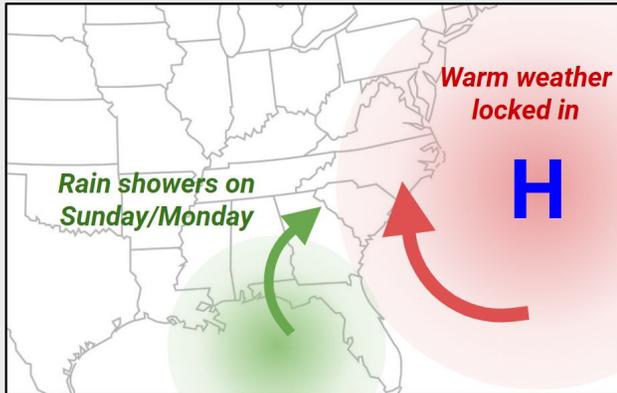
## Statewide Coverage by Category

Category	Current Coverage	Change Since Last Week
D0: Abnormally Dry	0.00%	0.00%
D1: Moderate Drought	30.01%	+16.72%
D2: Severe Drought	65.74%	-15.76%
D3: Extreme Drought	4.25%	-0.96%
D4: Exceptional Drought	0.00%	0.00%

# Short-Range Outlook for North Carolina

## Week 1:

March 5 to 11, 2026



### Warm All Week



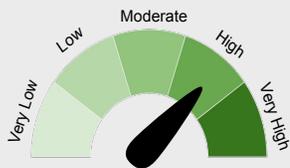
A summer-like weather pattern featuring high pressure off our coastline will cause unseasonably warm temperatures, with highs in the upper 70s to low 80s and lows in the upper 50s to low 60s. Those are 15 to 20 degrees above normal for early March.

### Spring Showers Begin



A warm, southerly flow around the offshore high pressure system will bring in Gulf moisture to fuel isolated showers, with the highest rain chances on Sunday and Monday. Most areas can expect rainfall totals of around half an inch over the entire week.

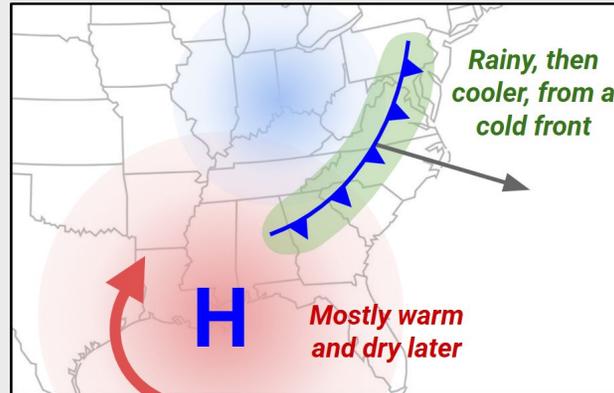
### Forecast Confidence



Record warmth is highly likely this week, but there is a bit of uncertainty about how widespread weekend rain showers might be.

## Week 2:

March 12 to 18, 2026



### A Quick Cooldown



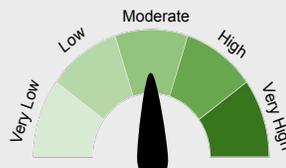
A cold frontal passage should usher in some cooler air by next Friday, along with drier air and wind that could increase fire danger. By later in the week, our temperatures should bounce back above normal as upper-level high pressure strengthens to our south.

### Frontal Rain Likely



The best rain chances this week should come from the initial cold front, with current forecasts showing totals of a half-inch to an inch. After that, expect mostly dry weather to wrap up the weekend with a few scattered showers possible later in the week.

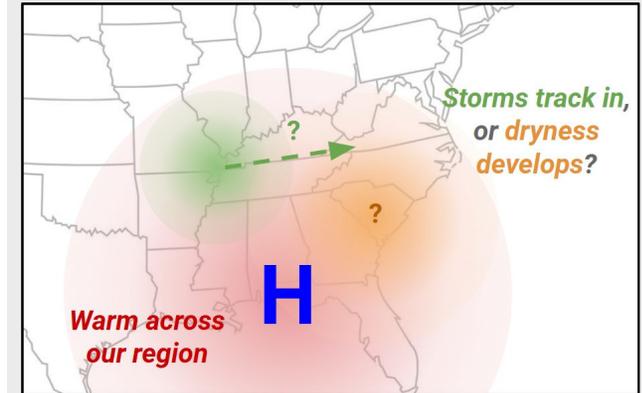
### Forecast Confidence



Small model differences in the timing of the cold frontal passage and another possible cooldown later in the week add uncertainty.

## Weeks 3-4:

Mar. 19 to Apr. 1, 2026



### Staying Warm



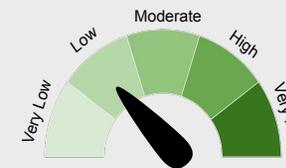
Persistent upper-level high pressure over the Southeast US and mid-Atlantic regions should keep our temperatures above normal through late March. Note that freeze events are still common through mid-April, so we're not out of winter's woods yet.

### On the Edge of Rainfall



Our late-month rain chances will depend on where the storm track sets up. A lingering La Niña-like track to our north would keep us drier and encourage an active spring fire season, while a southward track could bring regular rainfall events, like in February.

### Forecast Confidence



Confidence in the warm temperatures is offset by the knife-edge uncertainty about our precipitation pattern in Weeks 3 and 4.