

North Carolina Drought Update

Created By:

North Carolina
Drought Management Advisory Council
www.ncdrought.org

NORTH CAROLINA
CLIMATE OFFICE
climate.ncsu.edu @NCSCO

NC STATE

For the assessment period ending **Mar. 31, 2026**
From the US Drought Monitor, with input from the NC DMAC

The Main Takeaway

After our 5th-driest March on record statewide, Severe Drought (D2) now covers most of the Coastal Plain and Extreme Drought (D3) has emerged in the Mountains.

This Week's Summary

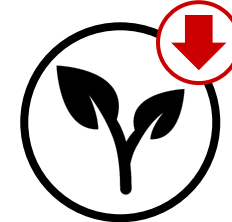
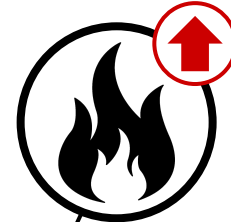
Aside from two locally heavy mid-month rain events, the past month had limited rainfall and ended with warm, dry, and windy weather that has prompted a statewide burning ban. In addition to wildfire activity, we're still seeing low streamflow, topsoil moisture, and groundwater levels. With little moisture flowing in, reservoirs may struggle to reach their summer targets.

Last Month's Precipitation

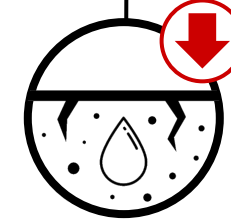
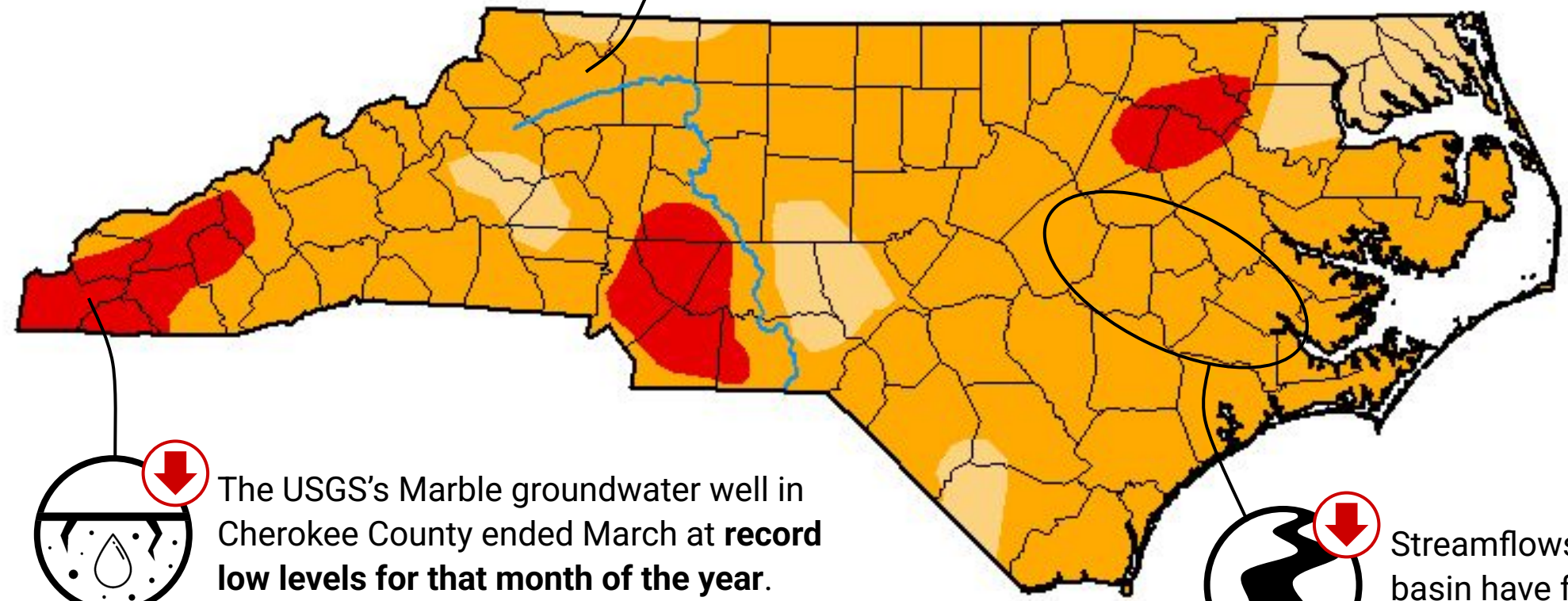
The statewide average was 1.86 inches last month, but the driest spots received less than an inch, including **Monroe** (0.75 inches) and **Newport** (0.78 inches).

For your local drought status, visit www.ncdrought.org

The largest wildfire this week **burned 600 acres in rural in Wilkes County** and was 90% contained by Wednesday morning.



This week's USDA/NASS Crop Progress Report shows **63% of topsoil moisture as short or very short** – a 49% increase since March 1.

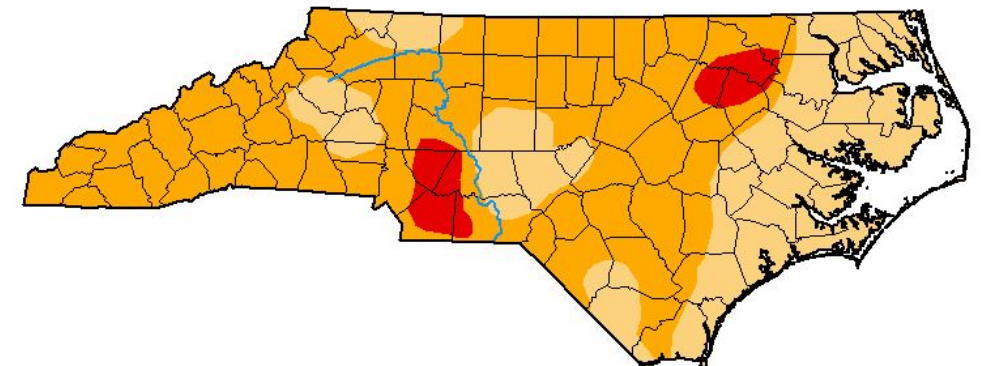


The USGS's Marble groundwater well in Cherokee County ended March at **record low levels for that month of the year**.



Streamflows in the Neuse River basin have fallen to **daily record low levels over the past week**.

Last Week's Drought Status



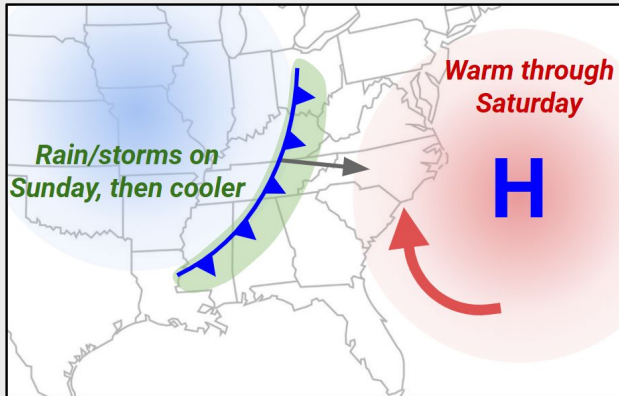
Statewide Coverage by Category

Category	Current Coverage	Change Since Last Week
D0: Abnormally Dry	0.00%	0.00%
D1: Moderate Drought	10.60%	-23.89%
D2: Severe Drought	79.76%	+18.95%
D3: Extreme Drought	9.64%	+4.93%
D4: Exceptional Drought	0.00%	0.00%

Short-Range Outlook for North Carolina

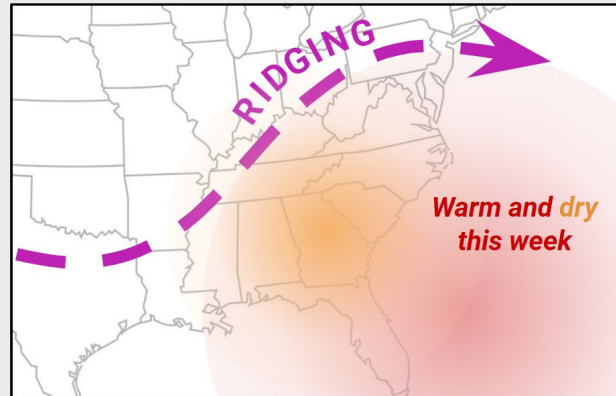
Week 1:

April 2 to 8, 2026



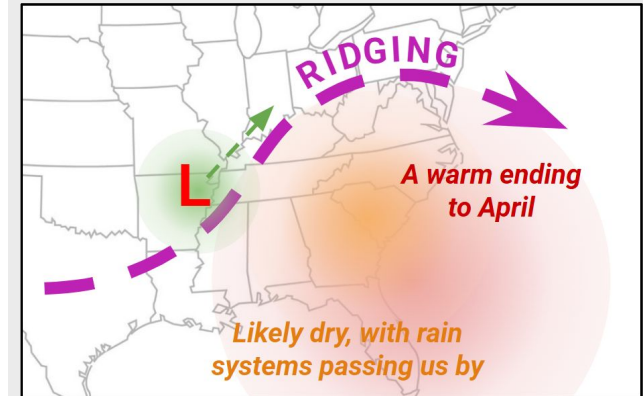
Week 2:

April 9 to 15, 2026



Weeks 3-4:

April 16 to 29, 2026



A Hot Start, Then Cooler



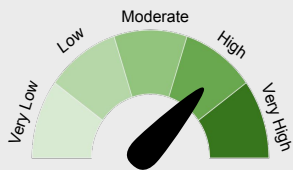
We'll remain in a summer-like weather pattern through Saturday, with offshore high pressure and highs in the 80s. A cold frontal passage on Sunday will usher in a cooler air mass by early next week, with highs only in the 60s and lows in the 40s.

A Sunday Rain Day



Widely scattered showers and storms are possible farther west on Friday and Saturday, with better rain chances (and potential severe weather) ahead of Sunday's frontal passage. Total precipitation should range from a quarter-inch to half-inch in most areas.

Forecast Confidence



The overall pattern is fairly clear, with some uncertainty surrounding the timing of Sunday's front, which could affect the severe threat.

Another Warm-Up Ahead



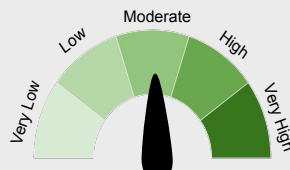
Jet stream ridging building over the eastern US means cooler weather will give way to above-normal temperatures for most of the week. Expect daytime highs in the 70s or 80s and mild nights in the 50s, effectively ending our freeze risk for the season.

Dry This Week



Under that ridging pattern with upper-level high pressure in place over us, it's likely to be a very dry week with perhaps no rain in parts of the state. The best chances for any precipitation could come at the very end of the week if another cold front closes in.

Forecast Confidence



While a late-week pattern change is possible once the next cold front arrives, most of this week is expected to be warm and dry in NC.

Warm Weather Continues



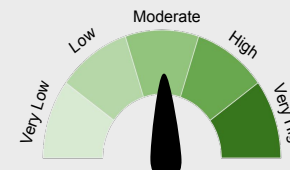
Entering April, all major medium-range forecast models showed persistent jet stream ridging over the eastern US and an ongoing warm pattern through the end of the month. Our average high temperatures at this time of year are in the mid 70s.

Likely a Dry Ending



With the jet stream off to our north and west, most weather systems are likely to bypass us, and we could have a dry two weeks to end the month. But as in February and March, small shifts in the storm track could bring us better rain chances at times.

Forecast Confidence



With a near-consensus among forecast models about how the large-scale pattern will play out, expect a warm and dry end to April.