

# CATAWBA-WATEREE

## DROUGHT MANAGEMENT ADVISORY GROUP

News Release  
March 18, 2008

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### Catawba-Wateree Drought Management Advisory Group Recommends Continuing Stage 3 Water Restrictions

The Catawba-Wateree Drought Management Advisory Group (CW-DMAG) recommends the region continue the current Stage 3 water restrictions implemented last fall to ensure an adequate water supply is available for essential needs. In their implementation of Stage 3 water restrictions, most of the public water systems in the Basin are prohibiting lawn watering.

“We looked at the status of each indicator in the Catawba-Wateree Low Inflow Protocol (LIP) and how each might change over the next several months,” said Ed Bruce, CW-DMAG Coordinator. “While some indicators are showing signs of recovery, the US Drought Monitor, streamflow and groundwater indicators are lagging the reservoir storage improvements.”

“It’s obvious to the community that we’ve had some nice rainfall, and the area’s lake levels are at or above normal levels for this time of year,” continued Bruce. “But what’s less obvious, and just as important to these lake levels, is how much less water is being removed compared to normal conditions.”

Since fall, the water use restrictions have reduced public water consumption between 15 and 30 percent of normal expected use. Also, Duke Energy has for months limited water releases from the dams to only the minimums necessary for downstream public water needs.

Although the recent rainfall has increased the storage in the reservoirs, natural evaporation from the reservoirs and transpiration from the area’s trees and plants, begin to remove large quantities of water from the Basin in the spring. These large natural water losses will soon return to their warm-weather highs, which are more than three times winter lows.

“The CW-DMAG members want to begin relaxing the water use restrictions as soon as possible without jeopardizing a possible drought recovery,” added Chuck Hansen, Public

Services Director, City of Hickory, NC. “We know the restrictions are really impacting customers that use water within the Basin. We all need the same thing: rain.”

#### Drought and Weather Indicators

In recommending current mandatory water restrictions remain at current levels, the CW-DMAG reviewed the area’s major drought indicators along with the National Weather Service’s predictions of six-month weather trends.

The U.S. Drought Monitor map shows the “Exceptional” drought area in the Southeast has shrunk over the last month and the Piedmont area of the Carolinas is now classified as “Extreme” drought, still a very serious drought designation.

Groundwater levels have stopped decreasing, but have not recovered appreciably.

The six-month average of area stream flows remains around 40 percent of normal, and the March average stream flows are only slightly higher.

The reservoir storage index has recovered to above normal for this time of year, but high summer losses from natural evaporation and transpiration of the area’s vegetation cover will begin to reduce the storage in the reservoirs without significant rainfall.

Rainfall – 2008’s first quarter rainfall is still well below normal.

National Weather Service Trends are predicting lower-than-average rainfall throughout the summer due to the continuing influence of La Niña.

The Catawba-Wateree Drought Management Advisory Group (CW-DMAG) was formed to regularly review the drought status and to recommend and coordinate needed actions for the Groups’ members. It also reviews the Low Inflow Protocol (LIP) and recommends possible improvements to Duke Energy. Normally scheduled to meet once a year, the CW-DMAG since late summer 2007 has received weekly drought status reports and has met as a group at least monthly. CW-DMAG members include the area’s public water suppliers and several large industrial users that withdraw water from the Basin, NC and SC agencies, the US Geological Survey, and Duke Energy. The CW-DMAG and the Low Inflow Protocol (LIP) are outcomes of Duke Energy’s relicensing process for the Catawba-Wateree Hydro Project. The LIP will become part of Duke Energy’s New License for the Project to be issued by the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission.