

# CATAWBA-WATEREE DROUGHT MANAGEMENT ADVISORY GROUP

News Release

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## **C-W DMAG Supports Limited, Temporary Relaxation of Outdoor Water Use Restrictions**

The Catawba-Wateree Drought Management Advisory Group (CW-DMAG) today concluded that current conditions in the basin can accommodate up to two days a week of outdoor water use for a temporary period without significant negative impacts on water supplies. This temporary change through November 30, 2008, provides the opportunity for some additional landscape watering during the fall planting season along with other outdoor water uses.

The CW-DMAG noted that, while the Catawba-Wateree Basin remains in a LIP Stage 3 drought overall, the recent rains in late August, coupled with seasonal decreases in temperature and natural evaporation, are stabilizing the region's water supply. Local water suppliers will provide guidance regarding the temporary restrictions specific to their jurisdictions.

"We anticipate that seasonal changes combined with the recent rainfall will continue to have a stabilizing effect on key drought indicators in coming months, and the CW-DMAG feels comfortable that the basin can support two watering opportunities a week during this optimal planting period," said Ed Bruce, CW-DMAG coordinator. "It could still be a while until a majority of drought indicators are at historically normal levels again, but with the cooperation of all users, we can successfully accommodate this short-term seasonal increase in water use."

"We're pleased that conditions indicate some temporary relief to our customers and businesses who have been affected by this long-term drought," said Ed Cross, Division Manager Water Supply and Treatment City of Gastonia. "We can support this temporary usage and encourage customers to continue conservation and implement smart water use principles outdoors."

With this year's cooler temperatures, decreasing evaporation and transpiration are expected to have a positive impact on overall drought conditions. Reservoirs remain at near-full levels, as they have for most of the summer, due to substantial user conservation and an on-going operating protocol by Duke Energy that releases only minimal discharges as needed for downstream needs. The CW-DMAG will continue to review drought conditions regularly and re-evaluate recommendations as needed at or before its next meeting in late October.

## **Drought and Weather Indicators**

In arriving at its recommendation, the CW-DMAG reviewed the area's major drought indicators along with the National Weather Service's predictions of future weather trends.

The U.S. Drought Monitor map shows the majority of the basin as being in a "Severe" drought but also continues to show a small part of the upper basin classified in an "Extreme" drought which is the second most severe drought classification.

The long-term trends for groundwater levels show mixed results that on average remain steady but are still well below normal for this time of year.

The six-month average of area stream flows has improved to more than 50 percent but remains solidly in Stage 3 LIP drought level.

The reservoir storage index has improved about 10 percent in the past month and remains in LIP Stage 1.

Rainfall: To date, 2008's rainfall has been about 6.3 inches below normal. The National Weather Service is predicting an equal chance for above, average or below average precipitation over the next couple of weeks. September is expected to end with below average precipitation.

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 CW-DMAG 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 has received weekly drought status reports since late summer 2007 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.

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### **Contacts for Local Water Jurisdictions**

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