

CATAWBA-WATEREE DROUGHT MANAGEMENT ADVISORY GROUP

News Release

March 4, 2011

Media Contacts: See local water jurisdiction contacts below

Stage 1 Drought Persists Across Catawba-Wateree Basin

The Catawba-Wateree Drought Management Advisory Group (CW-DMAG) today re-emphasizes that dry climatic conditions are responsible for the Catawba-Wateree Basin remaining in Stage 1 drought level of the Low Inflow Protocol (LIP). The LIP is an agreement between major water users in the Basin that establishes a shared responsibility and priorities to conserve the limited water supply during periods of low inflow.

Stage 1 is the second of five drought stages outlined in the LIP and recommends voluntary water conservation by all water users across the Basin. The Basin entered Stage 1 last October and has remained in it since. Local water suppliers will provide additional guidance on voluntary reductions for their jurisdictions as appropriate.

“Over the winter, we’ve been able to hold the lakes to near normal levels even though stream flows replenishing the lakes are less than 50 percent of normal,” said Ed Bruce, Duke Energy, CW-DMAG coordinator. “But warm weather is fast approaching, and that’s when natural evaporation and plant transpiration take much more water out of the lakes. Maintaining lake levels will be more challenging through March and April if rainfall doesn’t return to normal or above normal.”

Of the three LIP drought indicators or triggers, only the Lake Storage trigger, which is “Normal,” has kept the Basin from more severe stages. This is primarily due to the efforts of Duke Energy and Basin water suppliers managing the flow and use of water through the system. This trigger will become much harder to manage as lake evaporation and natural water uptake from trees, shrubs and grass increase.

The other two triggers have been worse for several months. Streamflows remain about 50 percent of normal indicating Stage 3. The broader U.S. Drought Monitor trigger shows the Basin in Stage 1 drought level.

“We’re closely monitoring the weather and the triggers,” said Ed Cross, Division Manager, Water Supply and Treatment, City of Gastonia. “Citizens continue to do a good job using water wisely in their homes, yards, schools and businesses since the last severe drought, and we’d like to keep that partnership going, especially if dry conditions persist or worsen into the warmer months.”

CW-DMAG members have been monitoring conditions closely since the Basin entered a Stage 0 drought watch in early August. According to the process established by the LIP, members receive regular updates and meet at least monthly until conditions return to normal. To learn more about the Catawba-Wateree Basin, local restrictions, and water saving tips, go to www.saveyourwater.org, a website provided by the Catawba-Wateree Water Management Group. For more information about the LIP, visit www.duke-energy.com/lakes/cwdmag.asp.

Drought and Weather Indicators

The CW-DMAG reviews the area’s major drought indicators along with the National Weather Service’s predictions of weather trends.

The U.S. Drought Monitor map shows most of the Basin in a “Moderate” to “Severe” drought condition.

USGS Streamflow Gages show the four-month streamflow average is under 50 percent of the historical four-month average and is in Stage 3.

The Lake Storage is slightly above Target Storage levels and is in Normal condition.

System rainfall for the period January 1 through February 28 is approximately 57 percent of the long-term average. Basin precipitation for six months through February 2011 is 15.35 inches or 69 percent of long-term average for the same period. The National Weather Service is predicting a below average chance for normal rainfall across the Basin through March and an equal chance of normal, below normal or above normal precipitation through June.

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 meets at least monthly when LIP triggers indicate Stage 0 or greater. 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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Catawba-Wateree Drought Management Advisory Group

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