

Lincoln County Moves to Stage 1 Water Shortage Condition

Lincoln County Government

Mandatory Stage 2 restrictions are lifted; voluntary conservation continues

LINCOLNTON, N.C.—Lincoln County has moved from a Stage 2 water shortage condition to a Stage 1 water shortage condition, effective November 4, 2026, following improved conditions in the Catawba-Wateree River Basin.

County Manager Davin Madden rescinded the Stage 2 declaration, in place since May 1, 2026, after consulting with Board of Commissioners Chairman Jamie Linberger, as provided in Chapter 50 of the Lincoln County Code of Ordinances (§ 50.02 and § 50.08).

On November 1, 2026, the Catawba-Wateree Drought Management Advisory Group (CW-DMAG) announced that the basin's Low Inflow Protocol (LIP) status improved to Stage 1. The streamflow indicator now stands at 67.3% of the six-month long-term average, which supports Stage 1. The reservoir storage index is at 103.2% of target, which has decreased but remains in the Normal range, and the three-month average of the U.S. Drought Monitor indicator also remains in

the Normal range. A return to LIP Stage 0 will occur when streamflow improves to at least 78% of the six-month average, provided reservoir storage and Drought Monitor values do not decline past their Stage 0 values.

What Changes for Customers

- The mandatory Stage 2 water use restrictions in § 50.05 are no longer in effect, including the odd/even watering schedule.
- Customers are asked to follow the voluntary Stage 1 guidelines listed below (§ 50.04). The Stage 1 goal is to reduce water use by 3% to 5% from a normal level.
- Administrative water conservation variances issued under § 50.12 expire automatically with this change, the variances are no longer needed under a Stage 1 (voluntary) declaration.
- Water rates tied to drought restrictions adjust beginning at the end of the current billing cycle as outlined in the FY2026-2027 Water and Sewer Fee Schedule.

“On behalf of Lincoln County and our Public Utilities Division, I want to thank our customers for the conservation measures they implemented during Stage 2. Residents, businesses, and community partners changed how they use water, and that effort helped protect our shared resource. Conditions have improved, but they have not fully recovered, so I encourage everyone to maintain their habits that made a difference. Hopefully a changing weather pattern over the coming months will bring conditions back to normal,” said Andrew C. Bryant, Lincoln County Development Services Director.

Stage 1 Voluntary Water Conservation Guidelines

- Limit car washing.
- Limit lawn, garden, and shrubbery watering to the minimum necessary for plants to survive, and reuse household water when possible.

- Eliminate washing down outside areas such as sidewalks, patios, parking lots, service bays, or aprons.
- Eliminate continuous running of water while shaving or rinsing dishes.
- Limit the use of washing machines and dishwashers, and run them only when fully loaded.
- Use showers instead of bathtubs, and limit showers to no more than four minutes.
- Limit flushing of toilets by multiple usage.
- Limit hours of operation of water-cooled air conditioners.
- Use flow restriction and other water-saving devices where possible.
- Delay new landscape work until the water shortage has ended.

Staying Informed

Drought indicators and demand on the water system will continue to be monitored by Lincoln County and the CW-DMAG, and the public will be notified of any change in water shortage conditions. Lincoln County designates www.lincolncountync.gov/drought as the official source for current drought stage declarations, restrictions, and conservation guidance. Customers with questions may call Lincoln County Public Utilities at (704) 736-8495. Billing questions may be directed to (704) 736-8497.

About Lincoln County Public Utilities

The Public Utilities Division, part of Lincoln County Development Services, operates and maintains the county's public water and sewer systems and administers water conservation measures under Chapter 50 of the Lincoln County Code of Ordinances.