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Abnormally dry conditions return to parts of Georgia

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Following a wet winter and early spring, Georgia's summer has been generally hot and dry. Much of northwest, north-central, southwest, east and coastal Georgia are abnormally dry. Over the past month, less than half of normal rainfall has fallen in some of these areas.

Over the past two months, many areas in Georgia have received only 70 percent of normal rain. For this month through July 19, Athens has received 42 percent, Augusta at Bush Field 29 percent, Columbus 44 percent and Savannah 44 percent of normal rain.

Counties in northwest and north-central Georgia currently classified as abnormally dry are north and west of Haralson, Polk, Bartow, Cherokee, north-Fulton, Forsyth, Dawson, Lumpkin and Union, inclusive.

In southwest Georgia, counties classified as abnormally dry are west of a Muscogee, Chattahoochee, Stewart, Webster, Sumter, Crisp, Lee, Dougherty, Baker, Decatur, Grady, Thomas and Brooks, inclusive.

In coastal and east Georgia, counties classified as abnormally dry are Madison, Elbert, Clarke, Oglethorpe, Wilkes, Lincoln, Taliaferro, Warren, McDuffie, Columbia, Richmond, Burke, Wilcox, Ben Hill, Dodge, Telfair, Laurens, Wheeler, Montgomery, Treutlen, Emanuel, Jenkins, Candler, Evans, Screven, Bulloch, Effingham, Chatham, Bryan, Liberty, Long, McIntosh, Wayne, Glynn, Brantley and Camden.

Exceptions to the drying trend include much of the central and west piedmont and the north-central and south-central coastal plain. Atlanta has received 102 percent of normal rain over the past month. Macon has received 234 percent of normal rain over the past month.

With temperatures remaining in the 90s and low 100s with little or no rain, soils statewide will continue to dry. This will lead to increased plant stress.

As of late July, stream flows and reservoir layers are near normal to above normal across the state. Water resources are anticipated to be near normal over the next few months.

The ocean-atmosphere system has switched into a La Niña pattern. According to the Florida State University's Center for Ocean-Atmospheric Prediction Studies, the La Niña pattern increases the likelihood that the East Coast will experience a land-falling tropical system compared to normal. If an active tropical storm season develops as forecasted, then we can

expect an increased likelihood that dry conditions could be relieved by summer and fall tropical systems.

However, the La Niña pattern is associated with dry and warm winters across much of the Southeast. This means that we may have minimal recharge of the hydrologic system this winter. This increases the probability of widespread and significant drought for next year. It is too early to tell exactly how the La Niña pattern will impact Georgia, but we need to be aware of the possible short-term tropical impacts and the long-term drought impacts.

Up-to-date information on dry conditions across Georgia can be found at www.georgiadrought.org. Updated weather conditions can be found at www.georgiaweather.net.

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