

Drought Conference Call for Public Water Systems

Georgia Environmental Protection Division

Water Supply Program

April 21, 2026

Purposes of Conference Call

- Conveying to the public water systems that Director Jeff Cown is contemplating a declaration of a Drought Response Level 1
- Updating the public water systems of EPD's monitoring and observation of drought conditions across the state
- Articulating the responsibilities of the public water systems under Drought Response Level 1
- Receiving comments and answering questions from the public water systems

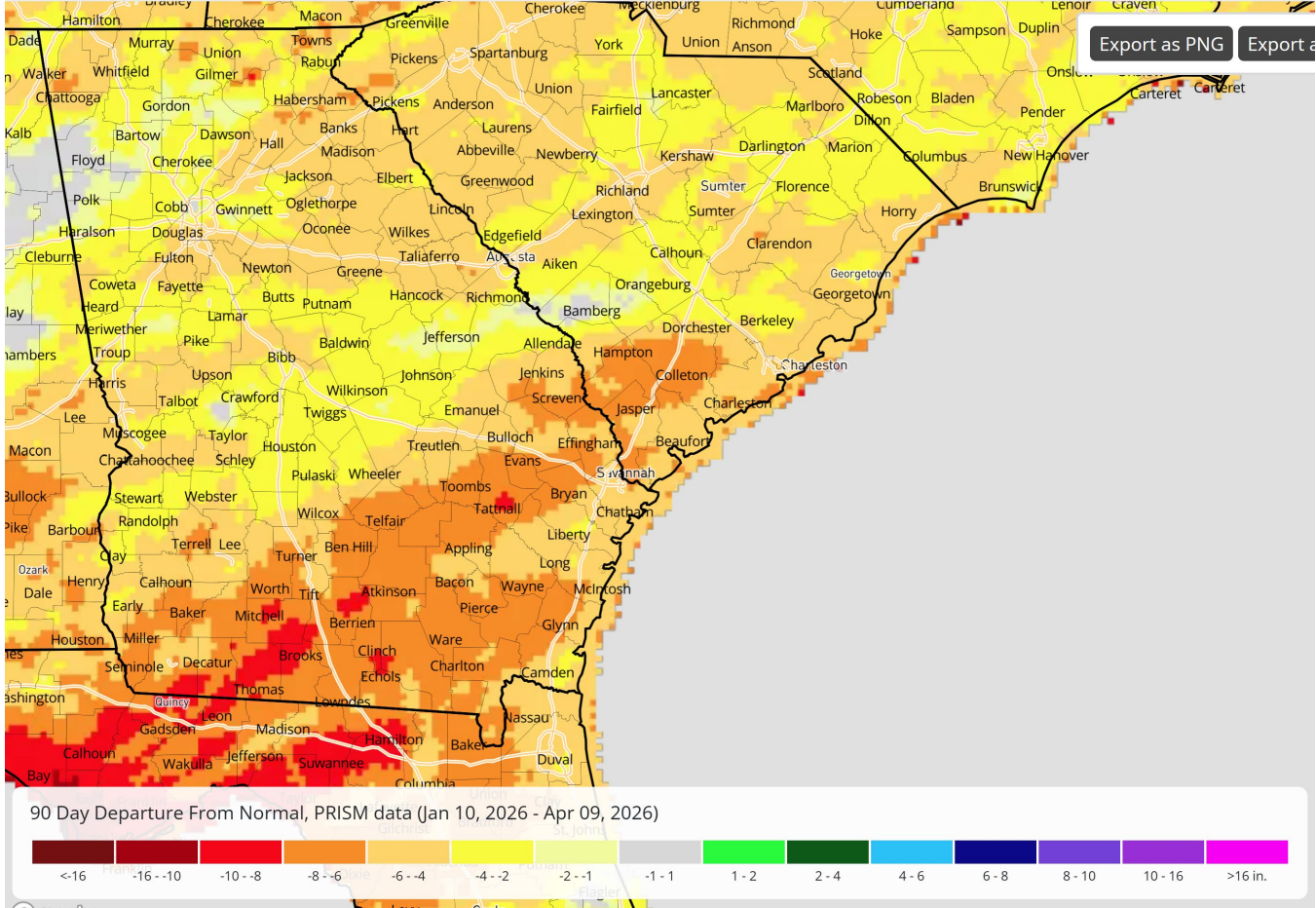
Director Cown Contemplating a Drought Response Level 1 Declaration

Updates on Drought Conditions in Georgia

Departure of Precipitation from Normal

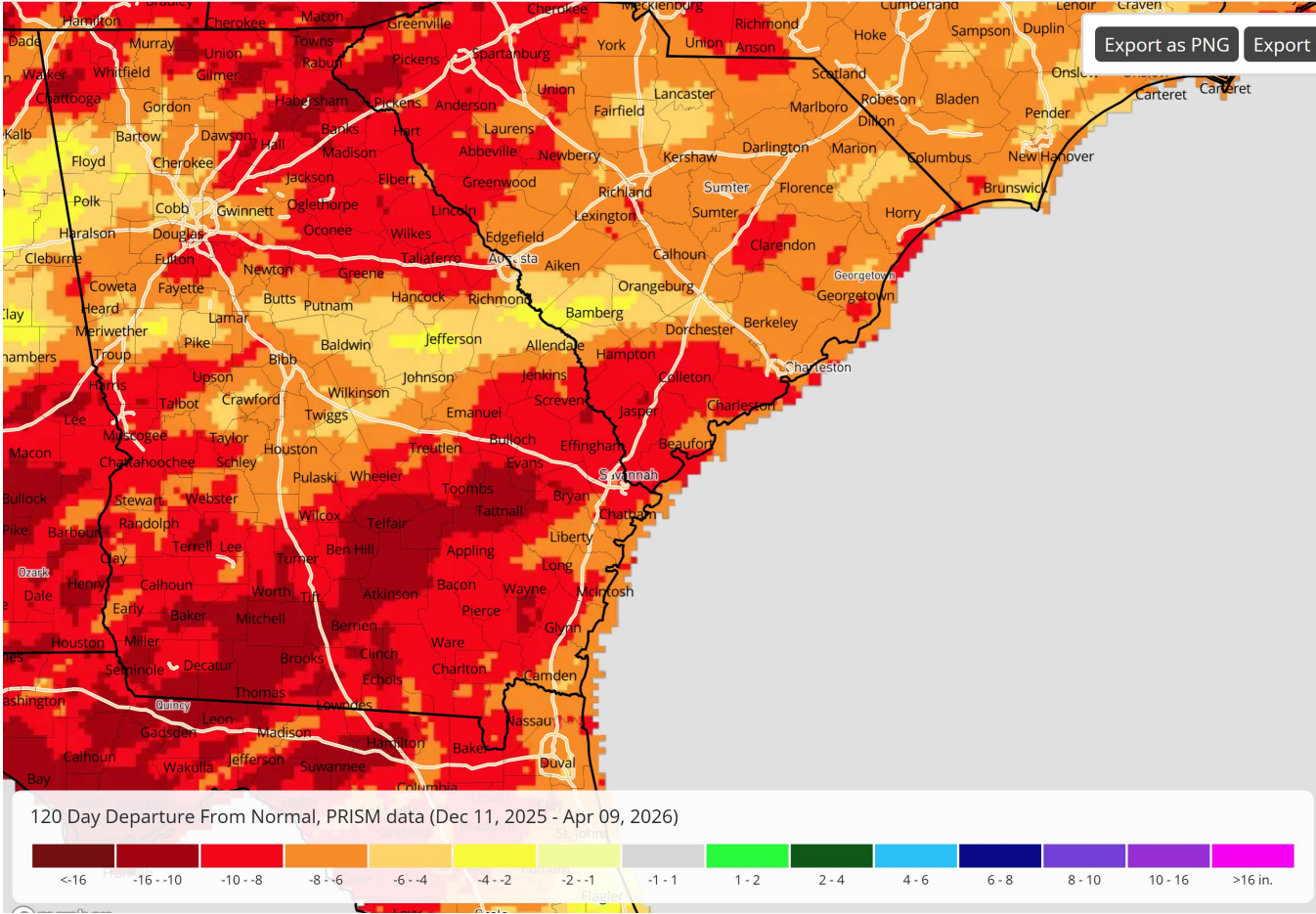
- 90-day departure: -8 to -10 inches in southwest GA
- 120-day departure: -10 to -16 inches in south and northeast GA
- 180-day departure: -12 to -15 inches in south GA and over -15 inches in isolated areas in far north GA

Departure from Normal



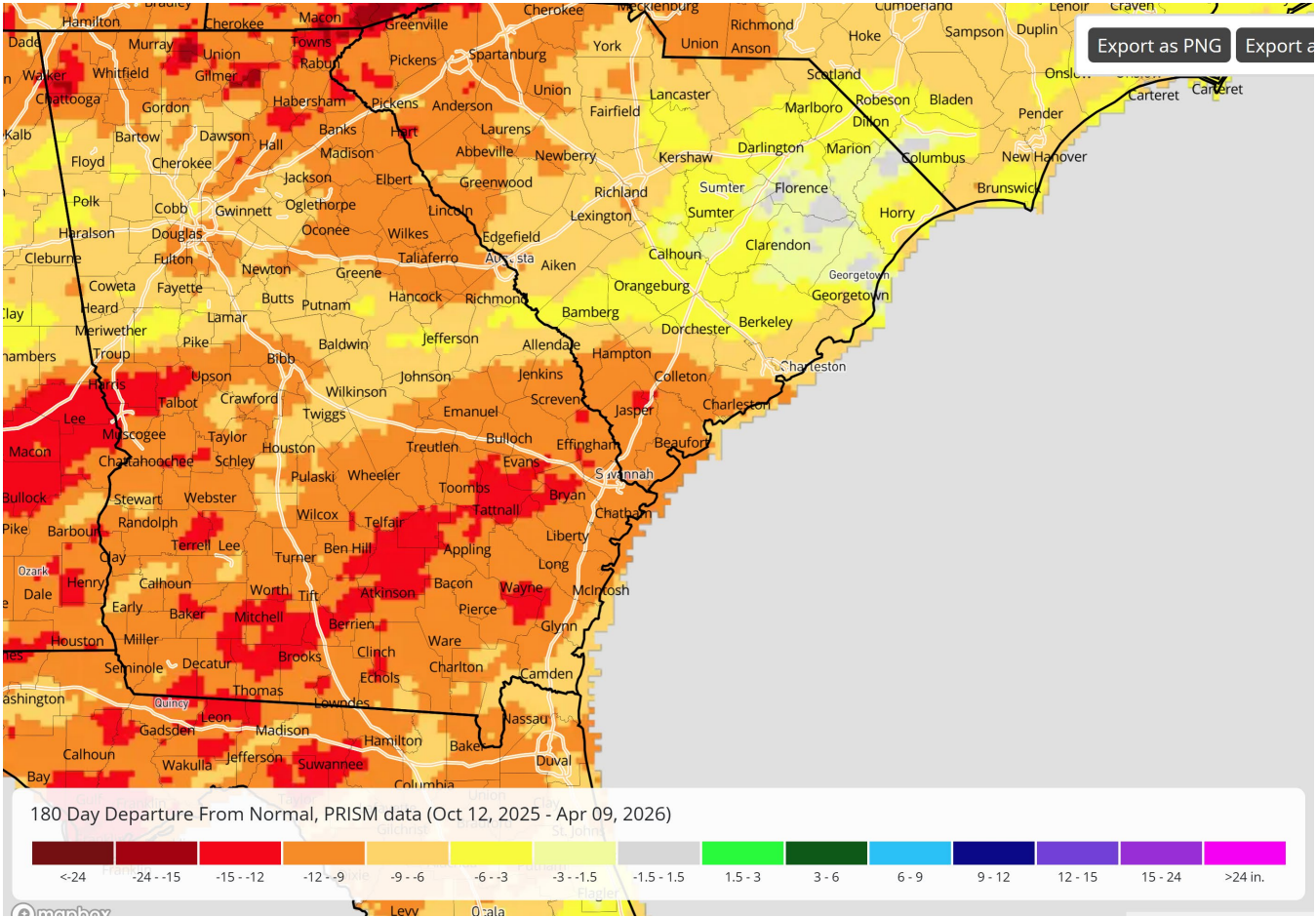
90-day Departure from Normal

Departure from Normal



120-day Departure from Normal

Departure from Normal



180-day Departure from Normal

Additional Current Hydrologic Conditions

- Stream flow – 21 of 34 monitored USGS gages show flow below the 10th percentile; in which 17 show flow below the 5th percentile, with 2 record lows
- Groundwater level – 15 of 16 monitored USGS wells show levels below the 10th percentile; in which 12 show levels below the 5th percentile, with one record low
- Reservoir conditions – Lanier in Zone 3, ACF Composite Storage in Zone 2, Hartwell and Thurmond at Level 2 Drought Response
- Climate Prediction Center outlook mixed message
- Water supply providers – No complaints so far

EPD's Published Drought Indicators Report

- This report is published on EPD's Drought Management website <https://epd.georgia.gov/watershed-protection-branch/drought-management>.
- It has been updated on a monthly basis.

Responsibilities of Public Water Systems under a Drought Response Level 1

- Public water systems are required to conduct a public information campaign to explain drought conditions and the need to conserve water.
- The campaign shall include one or more of the following: newspaper advertisements, bill inserts, website homepage, social media and notices in public libraries.
- It should target all commercial and residential water use, not just outdoor watering.
- It should emphasize what customers should do to be good stewards of our water resources.

Responsibilities of Public Water Systems under a Drought Response Level 1

- General landscape watering may be done between 4pm and 10 am each day;
- Irrigation of personal food gardens may be done at any time of day;
- Irrigation of new and replanted plant, seed, or turf may be done at any time of day for 30 days after installation;
- Drip irrigation or irrigation using soaker hoses may be done at any time of day; and
- Handwatering with a hose with automatic cutoff or handheld container may be done at any time of day.

Responsibilities of Public Water Systems under a Drought Response Level 1

- Public water systems may petition EPD for a more stringent watering restriction by following a variance request process
- Information on seeking a variance can be found at <https://epd.georgia.gov/watershed-protection-branch/drought-management>

Questions and Answers

Contact EPD

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