

2026 Drought at Smith Mountain Project

Water Management Conditions

AT A GLANCE

1.1 million customers

2,886 employees

**61,300 miles of
power lines**

**7,840 MW
generating capacity**

Virginia Operational Impact

Service Area Size
11,031 sq. miles

**Transmission System
Size**
2,460 miles

Distribution System Size
33,881 miles

State and Local Taxes
\$14.6 million

The Smith Mountain Project (Smith Mountain and Leesville Lakes) is being operated under a FERC-approved Water Management Plan that uses a forecast-driven, probabilistic trigger system rather than a sudden, one-time drought response. The plan requires daily monitoring of lake storage, inflows, releases and downstream flows.

The plan is designed to balance:

- Smith Mountain Lake elevations
- Downstream habitat needs
- Pumped-storage operations

Under the plan, operations are adjusted based on forecasted lake levels and risk, not on informal judgement outside the approved operating rules.

- Trigger Point 1 is activated when there is about a 20% chance of Smith Mountain Lake dropping below 790.5 feet within 16 weeks. At that point, Brookneal target flows are reduced to 85% of the monthly minimum, or the floor if larger.
- Trigger Point 2 is activated when there is about a 2% chance of dropping below 790 feet within 10 weeks. At that point, flows are reduced to the floor flow, which is based on habitat minimums.
- Trigger Point 3 is activated if Trigger 2 is in effect, adjusted elevation is below 795 feet between Dec. 1 and March 31 OR when the adjusted elevation drops between 791 feet after Sept. 30. A variance is required to activate Trigger 3 outside these parameters.

Trigger Point 1 was reached on April 27, Trigger Point 2 on May 11 and a variance to implement Trigger 3 was granted to go into effect July 22. Operations will continue under the variance until lake levels rise and predictive models indicate stable inflows. Monitoring continues daily.

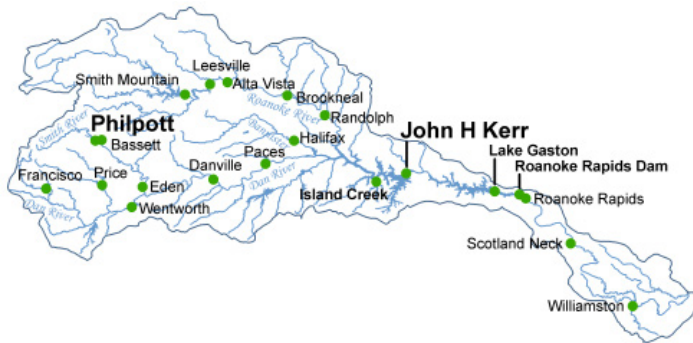
Since summer 2025, Appalachian Power Company has not released more than the minimum amount required by the license and legally required capacity tests.

The water at Smith Mountain Project is used for power generation, not data centers.

Low-water conditions are being managed through the FERC-approved operating plan, which is specifically designed to respond to drought and low inflow conditions.

Customers can view the [Water Management Plan](#) and see real-time lake levels at smithmountainproject.com.

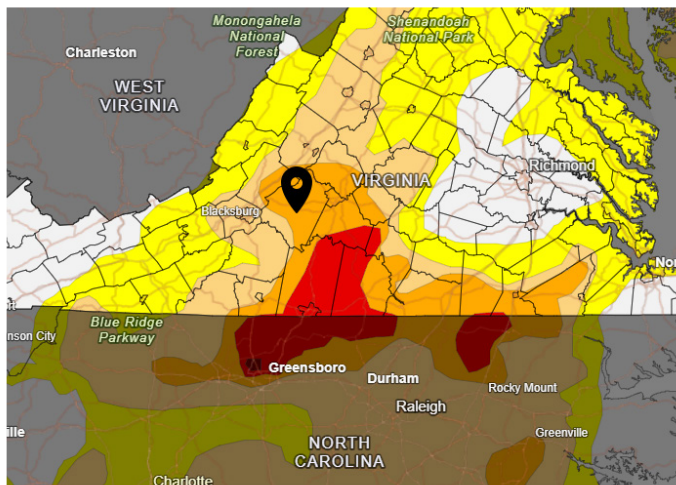
The Roanoke River Watershed



Source: U.S. Army Corps of Engineers

The Roanoke River watershed encompasses a vast network of rivers, streams, lakes and tributaries that drain more than 9,700 sq. miles across Virginia and North Carolina. As shown on the map, rainfall and runoff from communities throughout the watershed flow into smaller creeks and tributaries that eventually feed the Roanoke River, connecting areas from the Blue Ridge Mountains through Smith Mountain Lake, Philpott Lake and Lake Gaston before reaching the Albemarle Sound. Because all of these waterways are interconnected, activities anywhere within the watershed can influence water quality, wildlife habitat and water resources downstream.

U.S. Drought Monitor



Drought & Dryness Categories



% of Bedford County

0%
17.98%
82.02%
0%
0%
100.00%

Source(s): NDMC, NOAA, USDA
Data Valid: 09/08/26

Drought.gov

According to the U.S. Drought Monitor, the counties surrounding the Smith Mountain Project are experiencing widespread drought conditions, with the drought affecting all of Bedford, Campbell and Pittsylvania counties and more than 80% of Franklin County. Lack of precipitation has continued throughout 2026, with year-to-date rainfall totals averaging nine inches below normal as of Sept. 1. August 2026 ranked among the driest on record across the region. Year-to-date conditions have been similarly severe, with Campbell and Pittsylvania counties experiencing the fifth driest January-to-August period on record, Bedford County its seventh driest and Franklin County its 26th driest. These conditions reflect a prolonged rainfall deficit across the project vicinity and indicate continued drought stress throughout the region.