



Accurate as of May 2026

Water Infrastructure, Planning, and Drought Response in the South

Southern states entered 2026 facing unusually dry conditions, including record dryness in Georgia, North Carolina, and South Carolina. State legislatures, agencies, and governors have responded with water governance measures, infrastructure investments, planning updates, and drought response actions. [Text Wrapping Break][Text Wrapping Break]**Legislative Activity**

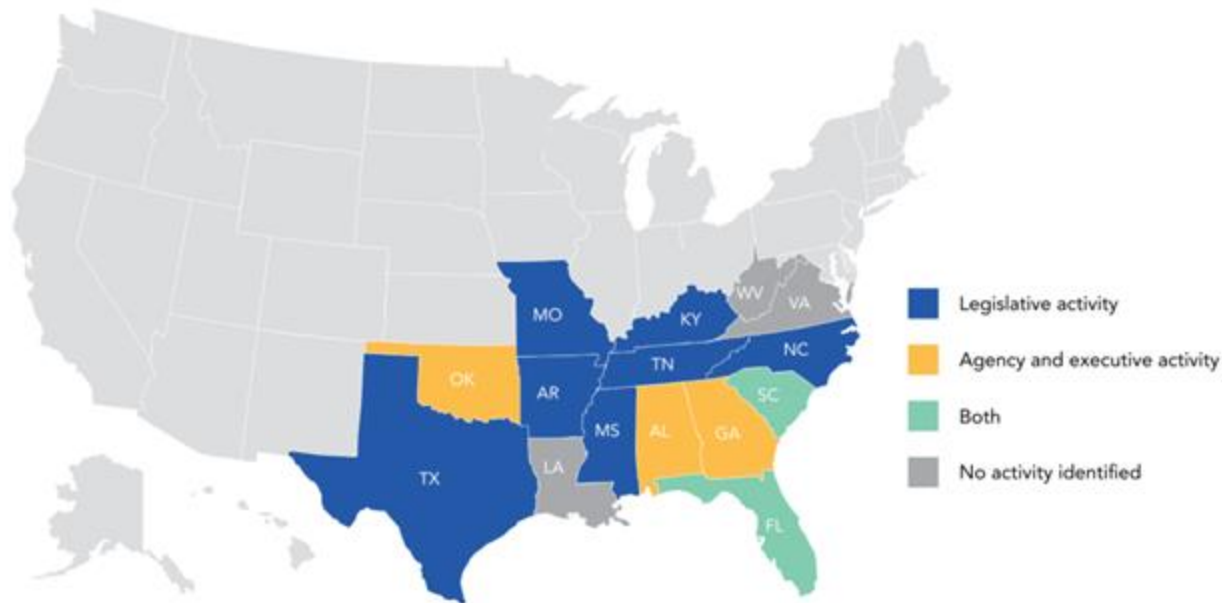
- ✧ **Water Infrastructure Funding.** Arkansas enacted a 2025 water infrastructure package (HB 1681, SB 420, and SB 421) creating new grant, public authority, and bonding mechanisms for water and wastewater projects. Kentucky enacted legislation in 2026 (HJR 81) releasing \$52 million for rural water system improvements; Tennessee enacted legislation (HB 2205 / SB 2175) prioritizing certain rural drinking water projects for infrastructure funding; and Texas voters approved Proposition 4, with companion legislation (SB 7), funding the Texas Water Fund and limiting support for projects that would transfer fresh groundwater outside its region of origin. Together, these measures created financing tools to help modernize aging water and wastewater infrastructure.
- ✧ **Water Governance and Oversight.** Mississippi enacted several 2026 water governance measures (HB 1677, SB 2310, and SB 2526) to create a regional board for Jackson's water and sewer systems and strengthen oversight of underperforming municipal and rural water systems. Mississippi's governance reforms aim to increase accountability and operational oversight following ongoing water service challenges, particularly in the Jackson region.
- ✧ **Water Access and Supply Protections.** Missouri enacted legislation in 2025 (SB 82) requiring permits for certain out-of-state water exports; North Carolina lawmakers removed regional water-access eminent domain language before enactment (SB 214); and South Carolina enacted legislation in 2026 (H5111) limiting restrictions on certain private wells and public water system connection requirements. Together, these measures reflect growing concerns about long-term water supply and external demand.
- ✧ **Minimum Flows and Aquifer Protection.** Florida enacted legislation in 2026 (HB 1417) ratifying revised minimum flow and water level standards for certain north-central Florida waters to help prevent additional withdrawals from significantly harming the Floridan aquifer system.[Text Wrapping Break]

Agency and Executive Activity

- **Drought Response.** Alabama issued 2026 drought declarations through the Office of Water Resources; Florida water management districts issued water shortage declarations amid severe drought and declining groundwater and surface water levels; and Georgia issued a statewide drought response declaration requiring public water systems to conduct conservation outreach.
- **Water Planning.** Oklahoma released its first updated Comprehensive Water Plan since 2012, outlining demand growth and infrastructure needs through 2075; and South Carolina released an updated State Water Plan to guide long-term water management amid growth, development pressures, and drought risk.



Southern State Policy Activity on Water Security, Including Infrastructure, Planning, and Drought Response



Source: MultiState. Data as of May 26, 2026.

[Text Wrapping Break] Sources

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- ⌘ Kentucky Legislature, [HJR 81](#), 2026 Regular Session.
- ⌘ Office of Gov. Andy Beshear, "[Gov. Beshear Signs Legislation Releasing More Than \\$52 Million To Improve Rural Kentucky Water Systems](#)," April 20, 2026.
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- ⌘ Ballotpedia, "[Texas Proposition 4, Allocate Portion of Sales Tax Revenue to Water Fund Amendment \(2025\)](#)."
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SOUTH

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- ∄ Mississippi Today, "[Governor Approves Jackson Water Authority Bill](#)," April 14, 2026.
- ∄ Mississippi Legislature, [SB 2310](#), 2026 Regular Session.
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- ∄ Mississippi Today, "[Legislators Take on Water and Sewer Accountability Issues](#)," March 24, 2026.
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- ∄ South Carolina Legislature, [H5111 / Act 158](#), 2025-2026 Regular Session.
- ∄ Florida Senate, [HB 1417](#), 2026 Regular Session.
- ∄ Alabama Department of Economic and Community Affairs, "[Drought Declarations](#)."
- ∄ St. Johns River Water Management District, "[District Declares Phase III Extreme Water Shortage](#)," May 2026.
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- ∄ Oklahoma Water Resources Board, [2025 Oklahoma Comprehensive Water Plan](#).
- ∄ South Carolina Department of Environmental Services, "[Gov. Henry McMaster Unveils Updated State Water Plan to Guide Long-term Protection of Water Resources](#)," Dec. 11, 2025.