

South broils under record temperatures

Associated Press

Thunderstorms brought moisture as well as damage to parts of sun-baked North Carolina, forcing farmers in at least 20 counties to ask for a federal disaster designation, a state agriculture official said Wednesday.

In the Southeastern corner of the state, no rain was recorded at the New Hanover County Airport. Jacksonville recorded 1.63 inches of rain, and Goldsboro reported 1.37 inches for the 24 hours ending at 8 p.m. Wednesday.

Agricultural Commissioner Jim Graham said 60 or more counties may make a formal request to the governor's office for disaster designation.

A series of violent thunderstorms swept through Mecklenburg County early Wednesday, causing at least one traffic death, starting dozens of fires and knocking out power to 10,000 people.

Meanwhile, the drought in parts of the Midwest was described as the worst since the Dust Bowl days of the 1930s. In the Carolinas it was compared with the disastrous droughts of 1977 and 1980.

With temperatures climbing into the 100s for the fifth straight day in many cities across the Deep South on Wednesday, more schools closed and more emergency cooling shelters opened.

A cold front stretching along the South Carolina border was expected to linger for the next few days and increase the chance for rain in North Carolina, the National Weather Service said.