

2nd-rainiest January in 50 years

JESSICA NELMS | THE JOURNAL

A Clemson University student leads a group on a tour of campus on a rainy Monday morning. Weather forecasts predict close to an inch of rain this week.

Rainy weather bringing lake levels up

BY MONICA KREBER
THE JOURNAL

Temperatures the rest of the week will remain in the low to mid-60s and dip into the 40s and 30s at night.

SENECA — The rain will keep coming down, but at least lake levels are going up.

The lakes are benefiting from the second-highest rainfall of any January in the last 50 years, according to Billy Birdwell, spokesman for the U.S. Army Corp of Engineers. And, with more rain predicted today and Wednesday, February is plenty wet, too.

Lake Hartwell is one of three man-made reservoirs monitored by the Savannah district for the U.S. Army Corp of Engineers (USACE) – the other two reservoirs are Lake Russell in Abbeville County and Lake Thurmond in Augusta, Ga. Out of the three lakes, Hartwell's water level has risen the most, said Birdwell.

"Hartwell has risen the most because it has received the most rain," he said. "It's a good thing; we've been in an extended drought."

The Upstate received about 5 inches of rain in January, according to the National Weather Service Forecast Office.

Birdwell said as reservoir levels rise, everyone benefits: it is good for the environment, it will make those who live on the lake happy and the hydro-powered dam will generate electricity as water goes downstream.

"This consistent widespread rainfall is exactly what we need," he said.

Not everyone is excited about the rain. The construction of the new Hampton Inn and Suites in Seneca is behind schedule, and more rain could delay the opening of the hotel until September, project developer Sanjay Desai told The Journal last week.

Desai said getting 3 to 4 inches of rain at the beginning of the month did not help.

"We're trying to catch up; bad weather has put us about three-and-a-half weeks behind," Desai said.

Brian Edwards, meteorologist with Accuweather.com, said as of last week the Upstate of South Carolina was in moderate to severe drought conditions. However, he said, the drought data has yet to be updated for this week, and all indications are the rating will be modified.

"You're going to get a significant amount of rainfall this afternoon and late tonight," he said Monday, "and more again on Wednesday."

Edwards said he predicts a cold front passing over the Southeast will bring three-quarters of an inch to 1 inch of rain to fall over the course of 8 to 10 hours starting today. Temperatures the rest of the week will remain in the low to mid-60s and dip into the 40s and 30s at night.

"I don't see any significant amount of rain after Wednesday," Edwards said. "Looks like the worst of it is in central South Carolina."

Jeffrey Taylor, meteorologist from the National Weather Service in Greer, said the current rainy conditions do not necessarily mean the rest of winter is going to be quite as wet.

"There is an equal chance that it could be wetter or dryer," he said.

mkreber@upstatetoday.com | (864) 973-6685