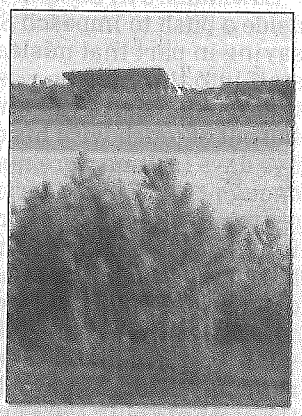
Atlanta eyes Hartwell water supply

BY JESSICA SIBLEY
THE JOURNAL

CLEMSON — Lake Hartwell has been a topic of conversation and debate through droughts and pollution controversies. Now if finds itself center stage as Atlanta looks for new sources of drinking water.

Georgia Gov. Sonny Purdue formed a water contingency task force in October, and the group promptly put a bull-seye on Lake Hartwell.



JESSICA NELMS/STAFF

Tree tops are sticking out of the now-full Lake Hartwell reservoir. However, Atlanta has its eye on the lake as a possible water supply.

The task force is charged with presenting all options for avoiding another water shortage in metro Atlanta.

It is a push that comes on the heels of a federal court ruling that Lake Lanier — metro Atlanta's current primary water provider — was built for hydropower, not as a source of drinking water and, as such, should be protected for power usage.

So far, the task force has presented numerous options out in front of a 2012 deadline for implementing other options before the outflow from Lake Lanier will be further limited.

One of the options called for an inner-basin transfer from Lake Hartwell.

A presentation in November called for 100 million gallons to be pumped from Lake Hartwell each day to service Gwinnett County.

Tom Coley, representative from

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the Lake Hartwell 660 Coalition, said the option could benefit both South Carolina and Georgia.

"The amount of water we are talking about here is really a miniscule amount," he said, "but the six counties that sit on Lake Hartwell could see some very nice royalties coming their way."

Billy Birdwell, of the Army Corps of Engineers, said a plan like this would be very involved.

"Technically, we own and control the bowl, but not the cereal," he said in reference to Hartwell's outflow. "So far, there has been no movement on this issue, and I really don't see it coming to fruition."

Coley, agrees that mandates from Congress won't be speedy.

"First of all, it is expensive to construct pipelines for the transfer," he said. "That infrastructure alone would deplete potential financial royalties. But overall, I want people to step back and view this as an opportunity rather than a threat. We wouldn't condone anything that doesn't have the best interest of South Carolina and Hartwell's community in mind."

But as of this week, the interbasin transfer may have moved somewhat off the radar as a task force report said, "No interbasin transfer options are contained in the alternate portfolios under evaluation. This is based primarily on relative cost effectiveness as well as on task force input and on implementation feasibility."

South Carolina is already involved in a federal lawsuit with North Carolina regarding the water supply in the Catawba River basin.