Corps has funds, plans for lake work

Work this summer to include facilities, road repairs, shoreline stabilization

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The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers is scheduled to get $94.3 million in American Recovery and Reinvestment Act funds for improvements in the Savannah District waterways,

Of that money, the corps said, $11.2 million will go to projects at Lake Hartwell; $14.3 million at Lake Russell and $16.4 million at Lake Thurmond.

Scores of projects on a list provided by the corps include shoreline stabilization and road work as well as repairs and upgrades to facilities ranging from courtesy docks to restrooms and campsite amenities at public recreation areas on the lakes.

Work will start soon, at least by summer, said Billy Birdwell, a corps spokesman.

"We can get people to work rapidly," he said.

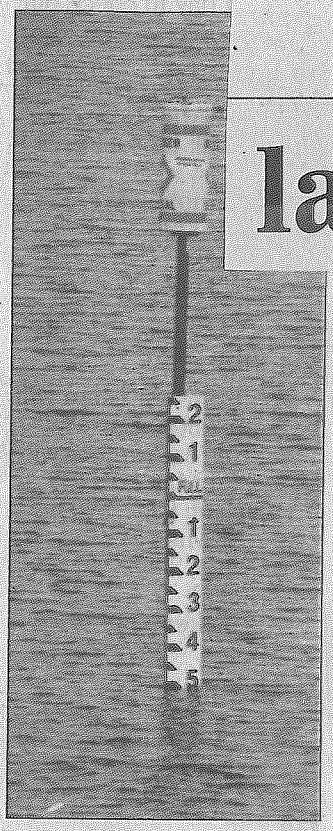
Some of the money will be used for monitoring of shortnose sturgeon to assess whether downstream flow discharges could be reduced during drought. Water levels during the spawning season of the endangered species were an issue this year in dealing with the current drought.

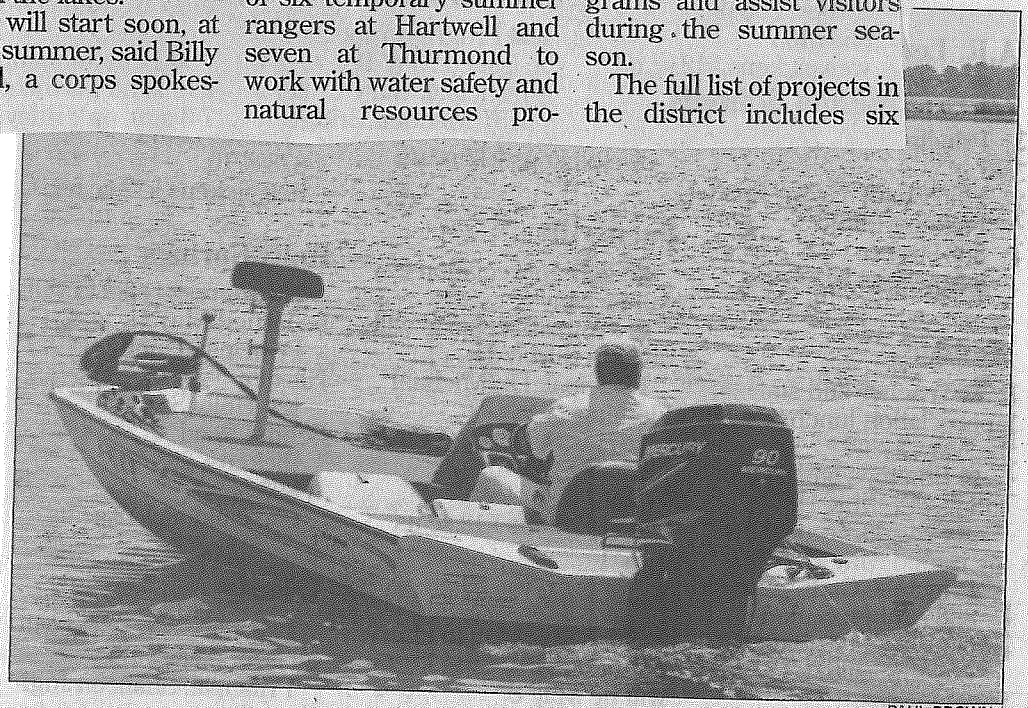
Money also will be used for installation and one year of operation of water-quality monitors on the Savannah River to gather data to determine conditions under which discharges from Upstate lakes can be reduced to conserve water during an ongoing drought.

Plans also call for hiring of six temporary summer rangers at Hartwell and seven at Thurmond to work with water safety and natural resources programs and assist visitors during the summer season.

The full list of projects in the district includes six construction projects totaling $15.55 million and $78.737 million in operations and maintenance projects.

"These projects will enhance our ability to provide clean, low-cost energy, monitor water quality, provide safe navigation, and improve recreation facilities for thousands of users," said Col. Ed Kertis, Savannah District commander.





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At left, the level of Lake Hartwell is currently about 5 feet below full pond -- quite a difference from the 26 feet just a few weeks ago. That means easy going for the boater heading off for a day on the lake.