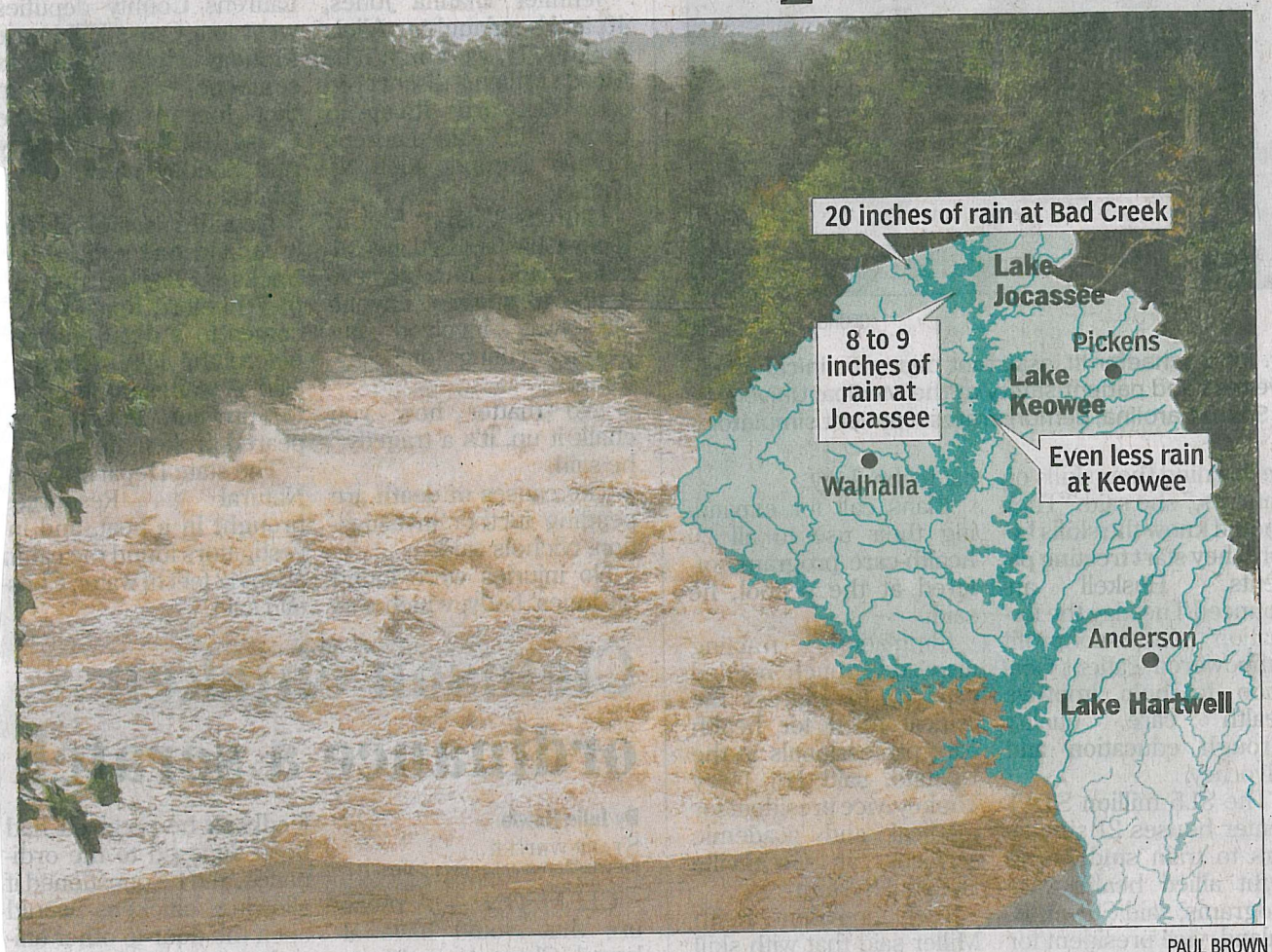
Drought threat ebbs as rain flows in Upstate



PAUL BROWN

The West Fork Creek in Oconee County, which flows to Lake Keowee, is normally a gently rolling stream, but heavy weekend rain turned it into a raging river on Sunday.

Wet weekend weather may have erased water deficit in some counties

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PICKENS — In almost the space of a single weekend, enough rain fell across the Upstate to halt advancing drought and possibly eliminate a drought declaration for at least two counties.

"It was a big improvement. The rain came at just the right time to keep us from slipping further into drought," said Hope Mizzell, the state's climatologist.

The recent rain raised the possibility of lifting drought status for Pickens and Oconee counties and possibly others, said Mizzell, who a week ago was poised to convene the state drought response committee to consider upgrading the area from incipient to moderate drought.

Mizzell said she plans to contact state agency committee members today to gather information on the impact of recent rains and investigate the possibility of lifting drought status for at least the two counties.

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Upstate lakes benefit from watershed runoff

Lake	Full pool	Level*
Hartwell	660.00	655.77
Jocassee	1110.00	1097.70
Keowee	800.00	796.60

* Feet above mean sea level

MORE ONLINE

Hear Table Rock State Park Manager Paul Knowland describe the impact of the recent rain in the park and the Upstate at GreenvilleOnline.com.

RAIN

FROM PAGE 1A

Weekend rainfall amounts varied across the Upstate, with four-day totals of 15.1 inches at the Walhalla Fish Hatchery in the upper corner of Oconee County, 5.5 inches at the Jocassee dam and 4.2 inches in Pickens, according to the National Weather Service.

The Anderson airport had 2.8 inches and Greenville-Spartanburg International Airport had just over an inch, according to the weather service.

"We have been drenched beyond all expectations," said Dennis Chastain, a northern Pickens County resident and a member of the state drought committee, who recorded 7.5 inches of rain at his home, most of it falling Sunday and Monday.

"Two things are extraordinary about this rainfall event," Chastain said. "First, the timing just could not have been better. Here in the Upstate we were headed down the road toward another season of serious drought conditions."

Stream flows had dropped off dramatically, Upstate lakes were well below full pool, and the ground water wasn't completely recharged from the drought over the past several years, Chastain said.

"Second, this was the kind of rain that not only helped recharge the ground water, the runoff helped fill the reservoirs back up. It's very unusual to get that kind of rain this time of year. Usually we count on a tropical storm or hurricane for that kind of rain," Chastain said.

Torrents of white water rushed down steep drops on Carrick Creek in Table Rock State Park, covering normally exposed boulders near a trailhead where children often play on hot summer days, said Poll Knowland, park manager, who recorded 7.5 inches of rain there since Friday.

"Right now the soil is pretty well permeated," Knowland said.

Short, passing scattered showers and thunderstorms are expected through Friday, with another round of widespread soaking rain starting Friday night through the coming weekend, said Larry Gabric, meteorologist with the National Weather Service in Greer.

The impact on area lakes varied with rainfall and water management — Lake Jocassee rose nearly 8 feet between Friday and Tuesday, Lake Keowee was nearly unchanged and Lake Hartwell rose 2 feet.

About 20 inches of rain fell at Bad Creek, 8 or 9 inches fell at Jocassee "and even less at Keowee," said Sandra Magee, a Duke Energy spokeswoman. The rise in Jocassee, which was nearly 20 feet below full pond Friday and was about 12 feet below full pond Tuesday, was due to a combination of rain and, in smaller part, pumping of water up from Keowee, she said.

It was an opportunity to rebuild storage in Jocassee, Magee said.

In addition, water was released from Keowee to Hartwell, she said. Duke was able to maintain Keowee at the current level, 4 feet below full pond, and also move water both up and downstream.

Hartwell was 653.72 feet above mean sea level Friday and 655.82 inches above mean sea level Tuesday, according to U.S. Army Corps of Engineers data. At its current level, Hartwell is 4 feet below full pond.

Mizzell said heavier rain on the Georgia side of Lake Hartwell also helped improve conditions in the Savannah River Basin.

The rains "made up some of the deficit," Mizzell said. With cooler temperatures ahead placing less stress on the lake from evaporation and outdoor watering, "This is one step on the road to recovery," Mizzell said.