Duke agrees drought

Recent rains bring Upstate reservoirs to 90 percent full, utility official says

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Duke Energy has joined the state of South Carolina and federal officials in lifting drought status for the area around the Upstate lakes that the power company manages.

Recent rains helped bring the Jocassee, Keowee and Bad Creek reservoirs up to 90 percent of full storage, the threshold for declaring "normal" conditions, Duke spokeswoman Erin Culbert said.

In April, the state's drought monitoring team declared the entire state out of a persistent drought, following steady winter and spring rains.

The Army Corps of Engineers, which manages Lake Hartwell downstream, soon followed.

However, Duke protested the state's decision based on its own calculations and later declared the basin in a minor drought status that lifted conservation restrictions but required the company to "monitor conditions."

The National Weather Service measured 1.22 inches of rain at Greenville-Spartanburg International Airport over the weekend as thunder-

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officially over

storms covered the region.

Duke and water utilities entered into a drought response plan in January 2012 that helps manage the water taken from the company's lakes during drought conditions.

The company is obligated to release water downstream to Hartwell to balance water flow to the Savannah River.

The Army Corps says lake levels should remain full through at least the middle of summer.

The state is drought-free for the first time in three years.

Since the new year, weather service records show rainfalls 4.57 inches above normal.