

Duke official says lake levels to decline

By Ray Chandler
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OCONEE COUNTY — Managing lake levels is a delicate balancing act at best, a Duke official said Thursday, but the general outlook calls for levels of some lakes to decline.

Lake Jocassee can expect to take the biggest hit, said George Galleher of Duke Energy hydroelectric operations, because of the lake's part in the whole balancing act.

Galleher spoke at a forum on the overall health of the Duke Energy lakes and their watershed. The forum was sponsored by the Friends of Lake Keowee Society and held at Duke Energy's World of Energy center north of Seneca.

Duke has a contract with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to release water from the Keowee-Toxaway projects to keep the lakes in balance with the Corps projects on the Savannah River, Galleher said, and the general expectation is that the Corps will need to draw on the Duke projects for water in coming months to keep levels in Hartwell Lake and Lake Thurmond from falling too low.

According to data from the Corps' Web site, net inflows into Hartwell Lake for the coming 10-week period are expected to begin at 16 percent of normal and top out at 20 percent of normal. Lake Thurmond is expected to begin with a -6 percent of normal net inflow before reaching 20 percent.

Hartwell Lake's level stood at 654.25 feet above mean sea level, 5.75 feet below full pool, and is expected to decline in 10 weeks to about 650 feet by November.

"Hartwell and Thurmond will start to fall," Galleher said. "Lake Keowee will stay much as it is, but Lake Jocassee will fall."

Lake Keowee's level will be maintained for the operation of the Oconee Nuclear Station, Galleher said, but water from Lake Jocassee, which maintains the system's pump storage capacity, will have to be passed through to help balance the Corps' lakes.

Lake Jocassee reached a low of 28 feet below full pool, according to Duke data, and is still 15.2 feet below full.

A wetter-than-expected spring meant fewer releases and a chance for Lake Jocassee to recover, Galleher said, but Duke's meteorological consultants are forecasting a drier-than-average fall and early winter – with as much as a 30-40 percent chance of less than normal precipitation – which translates into more of a drain on the lake.

Essentially, Galleher said, there is only one solution to the problem.

"It just needs to rain," he said.

Ben Turetzky, executive director of Friends of Lake Keowee Society, said one continuing concern of



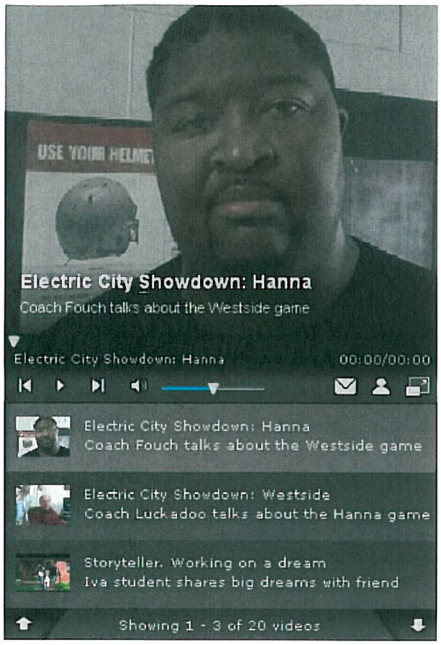
his group was the permit the city of Greenville has to remove up to 150 million gallons per day from Lake Keowee in an interbasin transfer.

Greenville is currently removing about 26 million gallons per day, according to Duke officials.

Turetzky said his group is paying attention to the issue because of Greenville's permit apparently being tied to the relicensing effort for the lakes' operation Duke has in the works with the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission. The license is on track to be renewed in 2016.

As stakeholders, the Friends group will be involved in the debate, Turetzky said.

"We're going in saying the 150 million gallons per day isn't inviolable," he said.



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