Firefighters work to extinguish fire on island



JESSICA NELMS | THE JOURNAL

Seneca firefighters gather 700 feet of hose and load a Keowee Fire Department fire boat Wednesday morning to continue extinguishing a fire that started at about 11:30 p.m. Tuesday. Seneca Fire Chief Jan Oliver said his fire department responded Tuesday night to the Lake Keowee island, which is about 30 acres, and realized there was nothing they could do because the fire was too far away. The Vineyards Fire Department's boat, which came from Pickens County, did as much as it could Tuesday night to extinguish the fire, but with low lake levels, Oliver said the boat could not get close enough to the island. Regardless, the firefighters were able to put out about 90 percent of the fire Tuesday night. Firefighters were back on scene at about 10 a.m. Wednesday and were extinguishing hot spots on the island until Wednesday afternoon. About 2 acres were burned on the island. Oliver said Wednesday that the cause of the fire was not known. No injuries were reported, but firefighters were battling the hot spots in warm daylight temperatures Wednesday. Wednesday afternoon it was decided to let the fire on the island continue to smolder and burn itself out. Officials from Seneca Fire, Oconee Emergency Services, Duke Energy and SC Department of Natural Resources will continue to monitor the condition of the burn-out over the next several days. There will be a potential for residents to smell the traveling smoke from the island, but there is no risk of fire spreading from the island, according to Oconee County Fire Chief Charlie King.