Good news, bad news for Lake Hartwell

By JESSICA SIBLEY
jsibley@dailyjm.com

SALEM — With the next six days calling for rain in the Upstate, the thirst of lake levels might just be quenched, but officials are still urging folks not to have false hope.

Sandy Campbell, park ranger for the Army Corps of Engineers, addressed numerous real estate agents at Keowee Key country club Thursday.

"What people many times don't understand is that water needs to come out of Lake Hartwell," she said. "We are part of a series of dams on the Savannah River, next is Lake Russell then Thurmond. It's somewhat of a balancing act on keeping the levels equal all the way downstream."

Although Campbell assured audience members that water from Hartwell is not being designated to benefit other lakes, she did state that a quick tweak in legislation could change that.

"So, it's important to talk to your representatives," she said after a question from John Powell, real estate agent.

Today, Lake Hartwell is at 647.87 msl (mean sea level), a good sign, Campbell said.

"It's risen lately over a foot from where we were about a week and a half ago," she said. "As of Friday, we basically stuck a plug in Hartwell. Hartwell and Thurmond are out of balance. Thurmond is down about nine feet, and we are down about 12 feet.

"Hopefully, with all this rain in the forecast, our beloved Hartwell will continue to rise and rise significantly."



Campbell

The 10-week projection for the level of Lake Hartwell is 651.40 msl, Campbell said, but that is still half a foot under what it was this time last year.

"If we don't get some significant spring rains, we could be facing another drought summer like last year," she said. "But remember in 2003 when, in two and a half days, hurricane rains dumped nearly 89 billion gallons of water into our area. It's fair to say that anything can happen."