

LOCAL NEWS

Hartwell back to October level

By Anna Simon

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CLEMSON — Lake Hartwell is up 3.73 feet from a Dec. 9 low, bringing the lake to a level last seen on Oct. 28, according to Army Corps of Engineers data.

December rain has brought the lake up and also made it possible to meet downstream release requirements from Lake Thurmond because it received proportionally more rain than Hartwell.

That means all the water coming into Hartwell is staying there, for now.

The plan is to continue to hold water in Hartwell for at least the next three weeks. That could change depending on the weather, said Billy Birdwell, a corps spokesman.

"We hope we get more rain and that we continue to get more rain throughout the basin," Birdwell said.

On Wednesday, at the end of a year of drought that brought the lake to record lows, Hartwell was 641.26 feet above mean sea level, which is 18.74 feet below full pool.

Also Wednesday, Lake Jocassee was at 76.9 feet on Duke Energy's scale that puts full pool at 100 feet, and Lake Keowee was 94.9 feet on that scale.

While Hartwell is rising, it's still down substantially, affecting boaters and lake property owners, as well as businesses that depend on lake traffic.

Hanna Curtiss of Taylors, a member of the Western Carolina Sailing Club, won't be racing in the annual Frostbite Regatta

on Lake Hartwell today because she took her sailboat out of Hartwell earlier this year as the water level receded past the end of boat ramps.

"I hate missing races. I really would like to be racing," said Curtiss, who probably will crew for someone else or work on the race committee Thursday since she can't race her own craft.

December brought 4.02 inches of rain to Greenville-Spartanburg International Airport, nearly an inch above the normal 3.37 inches for December, but 2008 ended with a rainfall deficit for the year, said Patrick Moore, meteorologist with the National Weather Service in Greer.

The airport received 38.03 inches for the year, more than 12 inches below the normal 50.24 inches annually, Moore said.

The first week of the New Year is likely to bring more rain.

There is a chance of rain starting Friday morning, when another weather system moves in, and chances increase with two more weather systems next week, Moore said.

The first will move through Saturday night or Sunday, and the next will move through Monday night or Tuesday, Moore said.

Both have more potential for widespread and significant rainfall, particularly one that is coming up from the Gulf of Mexico, which usually brings significant rain, Moore said.

That second system also could bring a wintry mix, depending on temperatures, but it is too early to tell, Moore said.