

## LOCAL NEWS

# Hartwell could start

With recent rain, halt to discharges, lake is filling, but drought not over

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CLEMSON — The Army Corps of Engineers will continue to keep water in Lake Hartwell at least another week and predicts that the lake could start summer better off this year than last year.

No discharge will be made at least through April 10, said corps spokesman Billy Birdwell.

The corps has stopped discharging from Hartwell for nearly a month, to allow it to fill. Downstream flow continues to come through the Thurmond dam.

Between recent rain that

continued Thursday and the corps' action to stop taking water from Hartwell and bring it back into balance with Thurmond and Russell, Hartwell was 651.75 feet above mean sea level Thursday morning, which is a level last seen May 22 of last year, Birdwell said.

Chances are good that the lake could start this summer above 652 feet, its high point last year reached in early May.

Lake Hartwell remains 8.25 feet below full pool as drought continues in the Upstate.

State Climatologist Hope Mizzell said it's possible the Upstate could be downgraded from extreme drought to a lesser level when the state Drought Response Committee meets April 15.

Even with the improved situation, the long-range forecast gives no clear di-

## summer higher

rection as to how dry summer could be, and Mizzell cautioned people to "be good stewards of the resource as they make plans for spring and summer planting" and consider water use.

The level of drought "may be downgraded, but it doesn't mean the drought is over," Mizzell said.

On Monday, Clemson City Council is expected to change its water conserva-

tion status from mandatory to voluntary, following similar action of other Lake Hartwell water systems.

The downgrading gives consistency with other water providers, but "doesn't mean this thing is over," said Rick Cotton, Clemson city administrator.

A resolution drafted for the council to consider Monday advises people to voluntarily continue conservation practices, Cotton said.