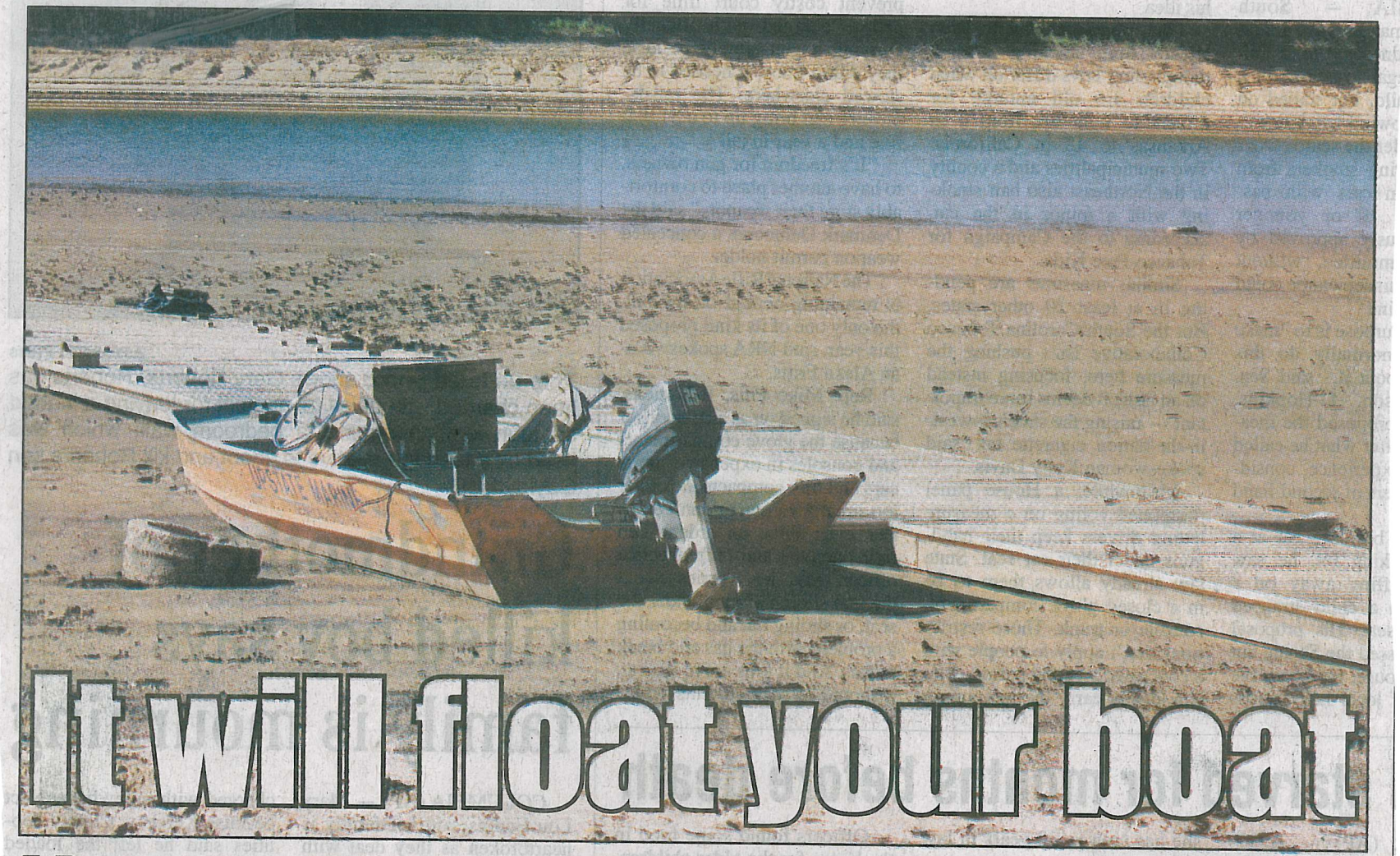
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It will float your boat

Hartwell's waters are finally rising

By ANDREW MOORE
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CLEMSON — The storm that cloaked much of Pickens County with snow and ice while soaking Oconee County is contributing to a significant rise in Lake Hartwell's waters.

Billy Birdwell of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers confirmed Wednesday that the Feb. 25 mark of 645 feet above mean sea level saw an increase between Feb. 28 and March 1. Hartwell's waters continue to inch closer to 647 feet.

"They should come up even more, because in the next day or so, we'll start discharging water from Lake Thurmond only, and Hartwell will be completely closed," Birdwell said.

That action will be taken in order to maintain balance in the Savannah River Basin's reservoirs, as the winter precipitation mean the Savannah River's streams and tributaries fully supported the basin's downstream needs, swelling Thurmond's waters. Hartwell's ceased outflows should eventually lead to more balance in roughly three weeks, and maybe longer, Birdwell said.

"The releases from Thurmond will bring it down and bring Hartwell up, and at some point they should meet in the middle," he said. "Once they do, both reservoirs will supply downstream needs together."

Lake Hartwell's current level, while 10 feet below the average 657 for this time of year, is a significant improvement over the 638 mark the reservoir saw just four months ago.

"People can expect to start seeing the lake come up some more," Birdwell said. "We encourage people to come on up, enjoy the reservoirs and remember to wear a life jacket."