Hartwell to get stimulus funds for projects

Lakes Russell and Thurmond also will benefit

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CLEMSON — The Army Corps of Engineers will spend $42 million in federal stimulus money for projects that will create jobs and improve facilities on their three Upstate lakes.

The money is part of $94.3 million for corps projects in the Savannah District funded through the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act.

Of that money, $11.2 million will go to projects at Lake Hartwell, $14.3 million to Lake Russell and $16.4 million to Lake Thurmond.

Scores of projects on a list provided by the corps include shoreline stabilization and road work as well as repairs and upgrades to facilities ranging from courtesy docks to restrooms and campsite amenities at public recreation areas on the lakes.

Work will start soon, at least by summer, said Billy Birdwell, a corps spokesman.

"We can get people to work rapidly," Birdwell said.

Some of the money will be used for monitoring of shortnose sturgeon to assess whether downstream flow discharges could be reduced during drought. Water levels during the spawning season of the endangered species were an issue this year in dealing with the current drought.

Money also will be used for installation and one year of operation of water quality monitors on the Savannah River to gather data to determine conditions under which discharges from Upstate lakes can be reduced to conserve water during ongoing drought.

Plans also call for hiring of six temporary summer rangers at Hartwell and seven at Thurmond to work with water safety and natural resources programs and assist visitors during the summer season.

The full list of projects in the district includes six construction projects totaling $15,550,000 and $78,737,000 in operations and maintenance projects.

"These projects will enhance our ability to provide clean, low-cost energy, monitor water quality, provide safe navigation, and improve recreation facilities for thousands of users," said Col. Ed Kertis, Savannah District commander.