



High: 85°
Weather, 18A

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Lakes hit critical level

Voluntary cutbacks urged on Clemson campus; Duke stops Jocassee releases

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CLEMSON — The drought's hold on the Upstate tightened further Friday when Clemson University called for voluntary water conservation on campus as Lake Hartwell's level continued to fall.

Hartwell was at 645.38 feet above mean sea level Friday, according to U.S. Army Corps of Engineers data. That is more than 14 feet below full pool. Falling below 646 feet

activated a "severe drought" phase of the university's drought management plan.

Corps and state officials in South Carolina and Georgia have been discussing the next steps as the drought persists, said Billy Birdwell, a corps spokesman.

Hartwell has about 20 feet left in its active pool, but Thurmond Lake has just over 4 feet of active pool remaining. Without significant rain in the next few weeks, Thurmond

could hit a level that would trigger greater pull on Hartwell to provide downstream flow required by the states, Birdwell said.

Lake Jocassee, which was 27 feet below full pool Friday, is below its minimum operating range. Duke Energy stopped downstream releases to Hartwell two months ago, except for required testing, said Duke spokeswoman Sandra Magee.

Duke's contract with the corps doesn't require releases if water falls below a minimum storage level, she said.

The Anderson Regional

Joint Water System, which draws from Hartwell and serves 14 water providers in Anderson and Pickens counties, is at about 50 percent of normal storage and is about 40 to 60 days away from mandatory restrictions if conditions don't change, said Scott Willett, executive director.

The system has called for "aggressive voluntary conservation," Willett said.

"We're still praying that all this blustery weather drops something on us," he said, adding it will take sustained rainfall to recharge the groundwater and begin to break the drought.