No sweat

Officials say they're not worried about water, yet

BY ANDREW MOORE
THE JOURNAL

SENECA — It's hot out, but experts aren't ready to panic about a possible resurgence of drought conditions.

Most of the Upstate has received roughly 21 inches of rain this calendar year, roughly 2 inches below normal, said Meteorologist Doug Outlaw of the National Weather Service.

"We are starting to get dry again. Across the entire Upstate, we're listed in the abnormally dry category," Outlaw said. "The southern part of the state is in moderate to severe drought, so we're definitely in better shape than they are."

Both Lake Keowee and Lake Jocassee are roughly 96 percent of full pool, while Lake Hartwell stands nearly filled to the brim at 659 feet above mean sea level, approaching its full pool of 660 feet.

Seneca Utilities Director Bob Faires said there was little concern about the current weather patterns as it pertains to water supply.

"There's no drought-like conditions right now, but everyone should continue to conserve water," Faires said. "We always want people to use water wisely. It's a precious commodity."

Outlaw said most climatologists are calling for normal rainfall across the state and the entire Eastern Seaboard this summer, as the current weather pattern finds itself somewhere in between the two prevailing systems known as "La Nina" and "El Nino," which generally dictate not only warmth, but precipitation.

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WATER: Hartwell nearly filled to brim

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Clemson Utilities Director Benjie Mcgill did not express concern Friday over the hot weather.

"Currently, we do not have any plans for the drought plan to be implemented. Lake Hartwell is almost at full pool. I have not heard anything from the state about any drought notification," Mcgill said.

The State Climatology Office last listed Oconee and Pickens Counties as being in "incipient," or the next to lowest level of drought.

And while the continual heat accelerates the rate of evaporation, Outlaw said, July is generally one of the wettest months of the year.

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Ross Hanahan, left, 4, and pal Bryce Emerson, 3, cool off in the waters of Lake Hartwell at the Y-Beach in Clemson. Water supply and lake levels haven't been a problem despite a sustained period of high temperatures.