

## LOCAL NEWS

# Outflow from Hartwell

## Army Corps of Engineers orders increase after sturgeon study

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CLEMSON — A study of an endangered species of sturgeon has led to an increase in required downstream flow from Upstate lakes, and concerns are rising as drought continues.

Study of the impact of reduced flow on a spawning site for the shortnose stur-

geon was inconclusive, said Billy Birdwell, a U.S. Army Corps of Engineers spokesman.

Water managers and marine biologists are continuing to study the situation, and flow could be reduced again if there's more conclusive data.

Flow was increased Sunday from 3,100 cubic feet per second to 3,600 cubic feet per second, Birdwell

said.

Shortnose sturgeon spawn in the Savannah River as early as February and need gravel for eggs to survive, said David Bernhart, a National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration Fisheries Service spokesman.

The fish spawn immediately below the New Savannah Bluff Lock and Dam, which keeps them from moving farther upstream, but the gravel there is in shallow water

and could be exposed without sufficient flow, Bernhart said.

The federal agencies are continuing to talk and seek options, but what's needed is rain, Bernhart said.

The outlook is dim. The National Weather Service in Greer predicts a slight chance of precipitation through tonight and then nothing through the weekend.

The Upstate remains in extreme drought despite above average rain in De-

## resumes

ember, said Hope Mizzell, state climatologist.

Greenville received 2.98 inches of rain in January, 1.68 inches below normal for the month, and the Lake Hartwell area received 4.5 inches of rain, nearly an inch below normal, Mizzell said.

Lake Hartwell reached a record 22-foot low in December and was 14 feet below full pool Monday, at 645.97 feet above mean sea level, according to Corps data.

The outlook for the rest of the winter is dry, Mizzell said.

The state drought response committee will meet Feb. 19 and will evaluate whether additional actions are needed to conserve water.

Water consumption will again be an issue in the spring as people begin to work outdoors in their yards, Mizzell said, adding that her department will be working to encourage people to conserve.