

## **Possible changes to Oconee Nuclear Station pumps could allow more lake level flexibility, hydrologist says**

Ray Chandler/Special to Independent Mail

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SENECA — Possible changes to Oconee Nuclear Station pumps could lead to more flexibility in managing Lake Keowee's level in dry stretches, a Duke Energy hydrologist said Thursday.

George Galleher, an engineer with Duke Energy's hydro fleet operations, said a review of options is under way, part of an analysis requested by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.

Duke Energy is expected to complete its review in the spring of 2012, and if the company decides to make a change, that would take possibly five years to implement, Galleher said.

Galleher delivered a briefing on lake levels and their management Thursday at Duke Energy's World of Energy, adjacent to the power plant. The briefing to about 40 attendees was sponsored by the Friends of Lake Keowee Society.

Duke Energy will likely maintain Lake Keowee at or near its current level despite the current dry weather that shows little signs of ending, Galleher said.

The lake level is now at 96.7 feet, according to Duke Energy data, with full pool being 100 feet.

"We'll do whatever it takes to protect the Oconee Nuclear Station," he said. "And the usable storage of Lake Jocassee is expected to gradually decline."

Lake Jocassee, above Lake Keowee in the watershed, has pump back storage for extra generating capacity, but Jocassee's level would be sacrificed to maintain Keowee's level. In the 2007 drought, Lake Jocassee's level fell as much as 28 feet below full pool, according to Duke Energy data.

Lake Keowee's level cannot be allowed to fall below 15 feet under full pool, because cooling water for the power station's nuclear reactors is drawn from the lake.

The proposed changes to the power station's pumping systems could allow the plant to operate at lower lake levels.

Complicating the situation for the foreseeable future, Galleher said, is a dry stretch with no end in sight.

Both National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration meteorologists and Duke Energy meteorologists predict the current period of below-average rainfall to last through spring 2012, Galleher said.

"(Lake Keowee inflow) levels are not expected to return to normal without significant rainfall in 2011 and 2012," Galleher said. "And it's not predicted."



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