

Rains raise Hartwell's

Two-foot increase allows some boat ramps to reopen

level

■ Study to look at drought's economic impact on Hartwell. Page 8A

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Above average rain in the area that drains into Lake Hartwell has brought the lake up more than 2 feet from a Dec. 9 low, but a long-range forecast predicts a slightly drier than usual winter.

So far this December, 5.13 inches of rain has fallen in what is called the Hartwell sub-basin, just barely above the average December precipitation of 5.09 inches, said Virgil Hobbs III, operations project manager for the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers at Hartwell.

The area still shows a precipitation deficit of 11.29 inches for 2008, said Bryan McAvoy, meteorologist with the national Weather Service in Greer.

It isn't as large as the 21-inch deficit at this time

last year, but the effects of nearly two years of below-normal rainfall have taken a cumulative toll on area lakes, McAvoy said.

The recent rain has raised Lake Thurmond about three feet, enabling the Corps to supply all required downstream releases from Thurmond, Hobbs said. No water has been released from Hart-

well for more than a week and no releases are projected for this week.

Lake Hartwell was 640.25 feet above mean sea level on Dec. 26, according to Corps data. The average lake elevation for this time of year is just under 655 feet.

The Corps of Engineers recently received federal approval to decrease the

amount of water it releases from Upstate lakes, and so far there's been sufficient flow to meet downstream needs, Hobbs said, adding that the rain has helped.

In addition, Hartwell has risen to a point where boaters again have access. Six Corps boat ramps that have been extended should be usable with the higher

water, Hobbs said.

Ramps at Greenpond, Crawford's Ferry, Big Oaks, Hatton's Ford, Martin Creek and 18 Mile Creek should be useable again, Hobbs said.

Work is being done now to extend Broyles Landing, and that is expected to be completed by Jan. 1, Hobbs said.



File

Dan Phillips walks on land created by the prolonged drought in Lake Hartwell at the Twelve Mile Recreation Area.