

Jasmine Gregory bundles up against the rain and cold with her children Elijah, left, Mylayshia Johnson, center, and Aiyana Gregory on Main Street Wednesday. PHOTOS BY HEIDI HEILBRUNN/STAFF

RAINY TODAY, SNOW POSSIBLE

WET WEATHER MAY RAISE LAKE LEVELS

By Nathaniel Cary
Staff writer
ncary@greenvillenews.com



Upstate residents have so far only had rain to contend with, but that could change tonight with snow possible.

Get out your umbrellas and keep them handy because Thursday is expected to be wet. There's even a slight chance some snow could fall Thursday night into Friday morning.

An average of 2.5 inches of rain is forecast to fall along Greenville's Interstate 85 corridor during the day Thursday before it tapers off overnight, said Chris Horne, meteorologist with the National Weather Service station in Greer.

As temperatures tumble through the day Thursday, getting as low as 30 degrees overnight, rain may turn to snow between midnight and 1 a.m. Friday, according to the weather service.

The first large rainfall event of the new year is welcome news for Upstate counties that have been stuck in an extended drought that seemed to be worsening as winter approached. Recent rainfall has started to move the needle for lakes with low water levels and more rain may begin to replenish a groundwater table that's been bone dry for months, officials said.

Since Dec. 1, Greenville has outpaced normal rainfall amounts with 7.18 inches totaled, higher than the 5.97 inch average for that time period, according to the National Weather Service.

The rain is expected to begin falling steadily before the morning commute and will be heavy at times, Horne said.

The weather service issued a flood watch Wednesday afternoon that runs through Thursday due to risk of flooding along main rivers, flash flooding along streams and creeks and landslides along steep slopes. Multiple rain events during December, in-

See WEATHER, Page 2B

WEATHER

Continued from Page 1B

cluding the large rain the day after Christmas, have helped to moisten the soil enough so that runoff will make it to the rivers, and eventually, into Lake Jocassee and Lake Hartwell, said Dennis Chastain, an Upstate representative on the state drought committee.

"This is exactly what the doctor ordered," Chastain said. "It's what's required to recover from a drought. It's just that you have to have it over a long sustained period."

Lake Hartwell measured 647.11 feet on Wednesday, nearly 13 feet below full pool, according to the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. Lake Jocassee measured a depth of 75.7 feet, more than 26 feet below full pool, according to Duke Energy.

Both lakes are up slightly from their lowest point, which is welcome news but not enough to alleviate the current drought, Chastain said.

"When you get this kind of rain and you ride over one of the bridges over Hartwell and you can barely tell the difference, you realize how big our deficit is," Chastain said.

The Upstate was in a similar position last year. A dry fall was followed by wet months in December and January, but by late spring, the dry spell had returned and the western half of the state had dipped into drought again, Chastain said.

"You really have to keep in mind the big picture, and that is, we really have a multi-year deficit, and you're just not going to make that up in even one good rainy season," he said. "I won't personally relax and say this drought cycle has ended until I see these reservoirs up close to full pool."

■ Contact Nathaniel Cary at 864-298-4272, connect on Facebook or follow @nathanielcary on Twitter.