



**US Army Corps
of Engineers**
Savannah District

News Release

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Upper Savannah reservoirs enter Drought Level 2

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

SAVANNAH, Ga. – Drought continues to plague the upper Savannah River basin causing water levels at the Corps of Engineers reservoirs there to continue to recede. Hydrologists with the Savannah District announced today that water levels at Lakes Hartwell and Thurmond reached the second drought trigger level yesterday afternoon. Currently Hartwell averages approximately 20 percent of normal inflow while Thurmond's inflow is about 40 percent of normal. Precipitation forecasts show little rain for the region in the upcoming weeks.

“Unfortunately, we expect the reservoirs to continue their decline without tropical storm activity,” said Stan Simpson, a water control manager with the Army Corps of Engineers. “Since early spring we’ve seen another severe drought pattern developing.” Simpson’s and other water managers’ projections accurately predicted the reservoir system reaching Drought Contingency Level 2 near mid-August. Implementation of the new Drought Contingency Plan slowed the rate of decline and extended the date for reaching level 2 by several weeks, he said. He predicts the reservoirs’ levels to drop approximately 5 inches per week unless significant storms pass through the watershed.

In Drought Contingency Level 2, Corps workers further limit outflow from Thurmond Dam to a weekly average of 4,000 cubic feet per second while Level 1 restricts the maximum weekly average to 4,200 cfs. During August, weekly outflows from Thurmond normally average 6,720 cfs. Reducing outflow decreases the amount of electricity that can be generated through the dams but conserves more water in the reservoirs. The Corps of Engineers also uses its pump-back capabilities at Russell Dam whenever possible in order to conserve more water in the three-reservoir system. Water managers also strive to keep the levels of the reservoirs balanced.

Corps officials urge the public to use extreme caution when boating, swimming or fishing during the next weeks. As the reservoir levels decline, underwater obstructions will be closer to the surface or already exposed. This is particularly dangerous for boaters and skiers. Park rangers report that designated swimming areas have lost most of their water. However, swimming outside these areas can be dangerous. All visitors should wear a life jacket when swimming, boating or fishing. Dock owners may need to adjust their docks even further as water levels recede.

(more)

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The pool elevation on Aug. 16 was 653.9 feet above mean sea level (ft-msl) at Hartwell Lake, and 324.4 ft-msl at Thurmond Lake. Drought Contingency Level 2 is 654 ft-msl for Hartwell and 324 ft-msl for Thurmond.

For more information on current lake levels and projections, contact the Savannah District Public Affairs office at 912-652-5014, or visit the District's lake-level website at <http://water.sas.usace.army.mil> which now features updated links to drought management information.