

Haralson County finds some drought relief from Coldwater Spring



Stephen Gross/The Anniston Star

Anniston Water Works water treatment operator Jesse Castillo looks over the spillway at Coldwater Spring at the Anniston water pumping station.

- [By Laura Camper, Star Staff Writer, lcamper@annistonstar.com](#) 12 hrs ago

HEFLIN — As drought continued across much of the Southeast, water supplies in some places such as Haralson County, Ga., were suffering this week, sending them in search of more sources of water.

Charlie Walker, executive director of Haralson County Water Authority in Buchanan, Ga., said the board was called into an emergency meeting Saturday after the Tallapoosa River levels had dipped 6 inches below the authority's water intake pipes.

The board called for emergency water conservation efforts including closing outdoor car washes and no outdoor watering, "basically a complete and total outside water ban," Walker said.

Haralson County has purchased about 200,000 gallons of water a day from the Cleburne County Water Authority for about two years, Walker said. It is now buying more than double that to help boost its resources, he added.

Mike Copeland, operation manager of Cleburne County Water Authority, said Cleburne County buys water from Anniston Water Works and Sewer Board. That water comes from the Coldwater Spring, which is still flowing well, he said.

Drought conditions prompted Alabama officials to issue a no-burn order for most of the state last week, and state officials on Tuesday placed 28 counties under a drought emergency — the most severe category in a drought declaration. Those counties include Calhoun, Cleburne, Talladega, Randolph, St. Clair and Cherokee.

The water authority in Cleburne County sells about 80 percent of the water it purchases to Clay, Randolph and Haralson counties and the cities of Heflin and Ranburne, Copeland said.

It has increased its sales to Haralson County to 500,000 gallons a day, the most Haralson County is set up to receive, Copeland and Walker said. The arrangement was made in 2007, when the last major drought hit the area, they said.

“This is really just a blessing right now,” Walker said. “Anniston and Cleburne County, they’re some of the best friends we’ve made.”

Mark Prestridge, general manager at Randolph County Water Authority, said it buys about 99 percent of its water from Cleburne County and as long as that water holds out, the county is fine.

The cities of Wedowee and Roanoke have their own sources — Lake Wedowee and Crystal Lake.

Tim Coe, mayor of Wedowee, said the lake is down about 4 feet or so and still 4 feet above winter pool. The city won’t have any problems until the lake dips 12 feet below normal, Coe said.

Jerry Revis, general manager for the Utilities Board of Roanoke, is also confident there won’t be any problems as long as the rainy season arrives on time.

Crystal Lake is at 27 feet, about 11 feet below the norm, he said.

“We’re lower than normal but not anywhere near as bad as in ’07,” Revis said.

Haralson County, meanwhile, has pulled out the stops, literally, to beef up its water resources. County staff has cleared out beaver dams and debris along tributaries in hopes of increasing the flow into the river, Walker said. As of Tuesday, water levels had risen to 16 inches above the top of the intakes, he said. That, in combination with conservation efforts and increased purchases from Cleburne County, should give the city some breathing room until it starts raining, Walker said.

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