



## US Army Corps of Engineers®

Wilmington District

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### Corps stresses the facts: One big rain can't fix a drought!

**WILMINGTON, North Carolina**—A week ago, October 25<sup>th</sup>-27<sup>th</sup>, relief appeared to be arriving in North Carolina and South Central Virginia as a major wet weather system blessed parched areas with a long, soaking downpour. Cameras throughout the region captured wings of water spray flying up from car wheels and shining beads of water dripping from pine needles. Dry stream beds bubbled merrily with water and U.S. Army Corps of Engineers water control managers anxiously watched lake levels creep up—*just a little*.

Mike Money Penny, of the National Weather Service, called the welcome rain a 'Rogue Storm,' technically described as a 'cut off low' that became stalled by surrounding pressure patterns and stayed put to drop rain for an unusually long time. Then Money Penny said, 'nothing more is coming!' The drought is not over.

"We all bought time with this rain," said Wilmington District's water control manager Terry Brown. "The Corps lakes have all benefited, but none are back up to guide curve, and stream flows are already dropping back." To give an idea of the extent of the benefit from this rain, Brown showed the region-wide water management group a series of graphs charting the forecast downward trend of water in the lakes. After a brief bump upward from the rain, the graphs all are expected to sink back down, reaching their before-the-rain level on different dates depending on how much benefit the lakes had received and the types of uses expected for the water.

**Falls Lake**, hardest pressed of the Wilmington District's lakes, gained almost a foot of water from the rain, leaving it 'only' 7.8 feet below normal. It is still the most stressed lake in the Wilmington District area of operations. If no more rain falls, the lake will be back at its pre-storm all-time low level again about November the 18<sup>th</sup>. Thus the lake and the City of Raleigh gained a buffer of only about two to three weeks.

**Jordan Lake** fared best, and will likely not fall back to its pre-storm level until late January or even February, even if no rain falls. "Jordan got two feet of water, leaving it just 3.6 feet below guide curve," Brown said. "That extra margin, plus the benefits of an altered operation designed for the lake during the drought of 2002, will stretch resources there for considerably longer."

**John H. Kerr Lake** gained 2.7 feet of water from the storm's inflows. "If the Southeastern Power Administration returns to generating hydropower on a normal schedule, Kerr will feel the benefits of this rainfall until the end of December 2007, when

the lake would be expected to fall to its pre-storm level again,” Brown said. Again, the gains from the rainfall are significant, but in no way do they bring the lake out of drought conditions.

**Philpott Lake** rose 2.3 feet, but will be back to its pre-storm level by about December 3 if no more rain arrives.

**W. Kerr Scott Lake** gained just over 3 feet from the rain, and will fall back to its pre-storm level by mid-December unless rain falls again.

“Long term forecasts continue to indicate that a dry winter and spring still could lie ahead of us,” said Wilmington District Water Control Manager Terry Brown. “We and all those who depend on the water in these lakes are grateful that we have some added time to find the best way to stretch our resources,” he said. “But we recognize that we got a little breathing space, not a rescue!”

“While the drama of statistics like 90 days or less water remaining for the City of Raleigh has been suspended for the moment,” Brown said, “we have to remember that suspension could be over within three short weeks. We continue to press forward with all our engineering efforts to lengthen the life of water resources during this drought. We hope the public will continue to work right alongside us and conserve!”