

The History of Hartwell Lake

In 1950, Congress authorized the construction of the Hartwell Dam and Lake as part of a flood control and hydropower project. It was the second project proposed by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers for the Savannah River Basin. The first project, the Clarks Hill Dam and Lake, was completed two years later. (The third, Richard B. Russell Dam and Lake, was completed in 1985.)

In October 1955, construction work began on Hartwell Dam. Eight years and 89 million dollars later, Hartwell Dam was completed. It was constructed of concrete and earth and spans 18,000 feet (more than three miles) across the Savannah River. The concrete section is 1,900 feet long and rises 204 feet above the riverbed at its highest point. Earth embankments and dikes lengthen the dam at both ends. The spillway contains thirteen large gates, each forty feet wide and thirty-five feet high, for the release of water from the lake.

Hartwell Lake is a man-made lake bordering Georgia and South Carolina on the Savanna, Tugalo, and Seneca rivers. The lake was created by five miles up the Seneca at normal pool



Hartwell Dam and Lake project on November 20, 1957. Photo courtesy of the Hartwell Dam and Lake Historical Photos Library located at www.sas.usace.army.mil/sample/histphotos.htm.

Lake and makes the area easily accessible to visitors. Now Hartwell Lake is

one of the top three most visited Corps lakes in the nation. More than 14 million people visit Hartwell annually to pursue various outdoor experiences.

Hartwell Lake comprises nearly 56,000 acres of water with a shoreline of 962 miles. The entire Hartwell project contains 76,450 acres of land and water. Interstate 85 bisects Hartwell

elevation. •