

Stubborn stump is latest twist in dam saga

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Judge wants stump removed from Easley-Central dam sluice gate

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NORRIS—A stubbornly stuck stump keeping the sluice gate open at the Easley-Central dam on the Twelve Mile River has to go, said a federal judge who is awaiting results of tests to see how much PCB contamination is behind the dam and wants the river cleaned.

The dam owned by the Easley-Central Water District remains the most controversial of three dams on the river in a 2006 natural resources settlement that ordered the two lower dams removed to help clean the river and cover PCBs on the floor of Lake Hartwell but left the water district dam in place.

"Nobody is happy with the prolonged opening of the dam so their trash and

DAM REMOVAL

■ Learn about PCBs and follow the efforts to remove the dams on the Twelve Mile River at GreenvilleOnline.com/PCB

chemicals can come down," U.S. District Judge G. Ross Anderson Jr. told GreenvilleOnline.com.

Anderson said he will wait until Thursday when he meets with special receivers he appointed to oversee the settlement, and if nothing is done by then and he isn't convinced otherwise, he will call the water district into court and order the stump removed in a reasonable timeframe.

The stump became lodged in the sluice gate last fall when the dam was opened for regular flush-

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DAM

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ing, said Larry Hudson, chairman of the water district board.

Workers tied cables to the stump and tried to pull it out with a tractor, "and it wouldn't budge," Hudson said.

The problem is that the water district must fully open the dam and drain the impoundment — letting all the water behind the dam spill downstream — to safely get workers to the stump, Hudson said. In addition, all of the work must be completed within one day to avoid interrupting water service to customers, he said.

"We'll have to figure out how to get it out. We try not to open the gates in the early spring because of the water flow," said Hudson, who wants to wait until May or June when there is typically less rain and the river tends to be lower.

Final tests to determine the extent of PCBs behind the Easley-Central dam were delayed by high water due to recent rain and were taken this past week, and results are expected around the end of April, said Brad Wyche, executive director of Upstate Forever, the lead of four groups sponsoring a project to remove the dam.

The test results could determine whether part of \$9 million paid by Schlumberger Technology Corp. would help pay for it.

The 2006 settlement stems from release of more than 400,000 pounds of polychlorinated biphenyls, or PCBs, between 1955 and 1977 from the former Sango-Weston capacitor



KEN OSBURN / Staff

A stump became lodged in the sluice gate last fall on the Easley-Central dam.

manufacturing site in Pickens, now owned by Schlumberger.

Despite strong public outcry for removal of the Easley-Central dam, settlement trustees delayed a decision on using part of the money to pay for removal of the dam until they know how much contamination is there and whether a revised dam removal plan is feasible — which the tests also could show.

The revised plans cut the original cost of removing the dam from about \$5 million to about \$4 million by leaving a portion of the dam in place and creating a new impoundment along one side of the river, rather than removing the entire dam and building a new impoundment reservoir, Hudson said. The water district is a project sponsor and has agreed to the removal provided there is no cost or interruption of service to customers.

Advocates say removal of the Easley-Central dam is needed to truly restore the river and clean Lake Hartwell of the toxic con-

tamination that has resulted in decades of health advisories against eating certain types of fish caught there.

Now that the Woodside I dam has been taken down, the river is cutting its new path downstream and dredges are working to remove contaminated sediment behind the Woodside II dam in preparation for its removal this summer.

Results of separate test samples to check for PCBs in floodplains left at the former Woodside I site could come as early as next week, Wyche said.

The environmental group paid for testing of a small number of samples after concerns were raised that too much potentially contaminated sediment had been left behind by dredges prior to dam removal.

"We need to know what's back there," said Larry Dyck, a river restoration expert who lives on the Twelve Mile and is concerned that dark streaks in sediment left behind could contain PCBs.

Dyck also is concerned that monitoring equipment required by the court to measure turbidity of the river disappeared after Woodside I was removed — monitoring intended to protect stream quality as the water seeks its new course.

Stephen Harris, a Schlumberger spokesman, said the continuous monitoring system was rendered "ineffective" by the changing water level upstream.

The river is being monitored as required by the court and trustee-approved final design plan, "using industry-recognized manual monitoring procedures," Harris said. Monitoring shows no increases beyond limits set in the final design, Harris said.

Dyck said he hasn't seen Schlumberger's data "nor is it readily available."

However, he sees "a clear difference in the color and the amount of material that is being carried in the water going into the project vs. going out."