



Charles Sowell/Staff

RIVER OF CONTROVERSY: Save our Saludas is a group dedicated to preserving the watersheds of the three branches of the Saluda River such as the North Saluda downstream of the reservoir.

Greenville Journal 2/1/08

Group forms 'Save Our Saludas'

BY CHARLES SOWELL
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Political activism and creating a system to check data produced by the state Department of Health and Environmental Control on water quality in the Saluda Rivers came out as the two main strategies of a new environmentally conscious group during an organizational meeting last week.

Tentatively named Save Our Saludas, more than 50 people packed the dining hall at the Marietta Fire Station. They were, overall, an angry bunch; frustrated by developer Jim Anthony's plans for his Cliffs at Mountain Park on the North Saluda River and fearful the other two branches of the iconic mountain river would be next on the development agenda.

Dianne Anastos, who chaired the meeting, urged that the session not "be devoted to griping about Jim Anthony and the Cliffs" but rather focus on what can be accomplished to minimize the damage to the North Saluda and protect the South and Middle Saludas.

John Tynan, mountain streams and rural waters project manager for Upstate Forever, offered his organization's help on everything from mapping to grant writing.

Frank Holleman, a Greenville attorney and environmental activist, told the group not to underestimate their potential. Citing the example of the Friends of the Reedy River group, one Holleman has been instrumental in over the past few years, he said. "The Friends of the Reedy was essentially started by two guys talking over their backyard fence. When you look at what the Reedy was, and what it is today, you begin to appreciate the power of local commitment."

Holleman also said groups such as Save Our Saludas have to be committed and systematic to be effective.

"You have to be willing to get in the local politicians' faces," he said.

Anastos said Joe Dill and Willis Meadows, the members of County Council who represent districts in the Saluda watersheds, had been invited to the group's meeting. "But we haven't heard a word from them," she said.

Efforts to interest state officials were equally ineffective.

The group plans to meet again to hammer out details of their program to save the rivers on Monday at 6 p.m. at the Marietta Fire Station.

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