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Cliffs developer gets water-quality certification for development on N. Saluda River

By Rudolph Bell
STAFF WRITER

State environmental regulators have granted one of the approvals developer Jim Anthony needs to proceed with controversial plans to build a Gary Player-designed golf course along the North Saluda River in northern Greenville County.

The state Department of Health and Environmental Control approved the water-quality certification after negotiating 16 conditions, including a 25-foot buffer between the golf course and the river, DHEC spokesman Adam Myrick said.

Upstate Forever, however, an environmental group concerned about the golf course's impact on the river, said it would appeal the decision.

"We anticipate that we will be joined in the appeal by several other organizations and individuals," Brad Wyche, executive director of Upstate Forever, said in a statement Thursday. "We will be issuing a press release next week explaining in detail the grounds for our appeal."

Anthony's company, The Cliffs Communities Inc., still needs permission from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to build the 18-hole golf course, part of his plans for The Cliffs at Mountain Park, a 5,000-acre luxury real estate community near the intersection of State 11 and U.S. 25.

The development, which is under construction, also would include 1,500 homes, a 300-acre pedestrian village and a new headquarters for the Gary Player Group, the legendary golfer's company.

Anthony said Thursday he was disappointed to hear of Upstate Forever's plans for an appeal. "We're certain that we'll succeed in the end on getting our project approved," he said.

Anthony also needs separate DHEC approval for a wastewater disposal plan for the development. He modified his original plans after the South Carolina Wildlife Federation, the state chapter of the Sierra Club and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service objected.

Originally, Anthony asked DHEC for permission to discharge up to 175,000 gallons of treated wastewater a day into the river. Before a Jan. 8 public hearing, he proposed treating the wastewater more thoroughly and spraying it onto the golf course and other land at Mountain Park.

Anthony has also scaled back plans to alter the river's channel, agreed to leave more trees along the banks and increased the proposed buffer to a minimum of 25 feet, he said Thursday.

"We've tried our best to meet the concerns of our neighbors, and we've listened, and we've definitely made a lot of changes, and we feel like it makes it a better project," he said.

Anthony said he plans to announce in the next few days additional information about his wastewater disposal plan. He said he would also use the occasion to summarize the revisions he has made and

to clear up "misunderstanding" and "misinformation."

Under a new process established by state lawmakers last year, the DHEC board has the option of taking up Upstate Forever's planned appeal, said Wyche, a former DHEC chairman.

DHEC's current chairman is Greenville developer Paul C. "Bo" Aughtry III. Aughtry couldn't be reached for comment.

If the DHEC board decides not to take up the issue, the appeal goes to the state Administrative Law Court, Wyche said.
