



Staff photo by Chris Trainor

Upstate Forever's John Tynan gives a presentation Thursday at the regular Greenwood CPW board meeting.

Lake 'in big trouble'

Group tells CPW Lake Greenwood is shrinking

By CHRIS TRAINOR
Index-Journal staff writer

"Lake Greenwood is in big trouble."

Those aren't likely words anyone in the Greenwood area wants to hear. Nevertheless, that was the message brought forth Thursday by Upstate Forever representatives at the Greenwood Commissioners of Public Works board meeting.

After numerous algae blooms began to become prevalent in Lake Greenwood in 1999, Upstate Forever was commissioned to do an intensive study of the lake and where it might be headed.

Elliott Davis' Charles Schulze, who also works with the Rasmussen Foundation, talked about that study Thursday.

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The report

■ The entire Upstate Forever report, titled "Saving Lake Greenwood," can be accessed by clicking a PDF link at <http://www.saludareedy.org/resLakeMgt.html>.

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"This is to look at the scientific data around the problems with Lake Greenwood," Schulze said. "This project took about four years. We committed a million and a half (dollars) to this project, Fuji committed another half a million, so we have a two-million-dollar study here."

Upstate Forever project manager John Tynan presented information to the CPW board.

"The algae blooms were really the first indication that Lake Greenwood is really in trouble," Tynan said. "That began to galvanize the support on this problem. There are a lot of people working here in Greenwood County to address the problem, and also the Saluda-Reedy Watershed Consortium was started."

Tynan said the Upstate development boom in the 1990s brought large amounts of sediment and different nutrients and pollutants downstream and into Lake Greenwood.

He said that, in that time, the lake has lost more than 300 acres of open water. That equates to more than 2 billion gallons of storage capacity lost.

"That's 11 million cubic yards of sediment," Tynan said. "To put that into perspective, that's about 10 Clemson stadiums filled to the brim with sediment. That's how much volume we have lost in Lake Greenwood."

"This will get worse unless we act now."

Tynan used Lake Conestee as an example of this theory. He said Lake Conestee, built in the 1800s, was originally a 150-acre lake. However, through the gradual introduction of sediment, it is now a 20-acre wetland.

"Through its 100-year history, the increasing of sediment and the formation of bottomland forests, Lake Conestee ended up with nothing staying in that lake," Tynan said. "Everything just passes downstream. All this phosphorous, all this sediment that's upstream of Lake Conestee, mostly in the urbanized corridor of I-85, comes down the Reedy River and eventually into Lake Greenwood."

"To put that in perspective, Lake Conestee was only two million cubic yards of sediment. We've already accumulated five-and-a-half Lake Conestees worth of sediment in Lake Greenwood."

Tynan touched on why so much sediment and phosphorous has made its way to Lake Greenwood.

"During this whole five-year project, we have clearly shown that upstream development, poor best management practices and poor sediment control practices are the primary causes of sedimentation coming to Lake Greenwood," Tynan said. "We not only see poor practices, but we have a difficult time enforcing them with the size of development and with the way some of our enforcement agencies are typically underfunded."

Tynan also pointed out large

amounts of phosphorous have trickled downstream from various wastewater treatment plants along the Reedy and Saluda Rivers.

"Phosphorous is the main factor driving algae growth; (it) comes primarily from wastewater treatment plants," Tynan said. Fifty-five percent of said phosphorous comes from the Saluda River, with 30 percent coming from the Reedy. Meanwhile 15 percent comes from lakeshore overland flow and various natural phosphorous coming from other sources.

Tynan did say wastewater treatment plants have reduced their phosphorous loading by 20 percent along the Saluda River and 40 percent in the Reedy during the study's time period.

Tynan laid out suggested ways to help turn the trend around for Lake Greenwood.

He advised Greenwood County officials to get together with Laurens County and Newberry County officials to develop a strategic plan to save the lake.

"That's one of the primary issues," Tynan said. "Greenwood, Laurens and Newberry County, the folks that own the lake and manage the lake, are given so much stuff from upstream. Plus, you have little to no say on how that is done, currently."

Tynan said Lakelands officials must strategically engage Upstate communities that are upstream to come to terms on common problems and solutions. Following that, pushing for action at the regional level would be the next logical step.

Tynan said officials track progress of improvements and demand accountability from upstream counties, from developers, from util-

ity providers and from conservation organizations.

In other business, the CPW board authorized the annual exchange of checks with the City of Greenwood. CPW made a contribution to the city in the amount of \$1,250,636.80. The amount was found by the commissioners to be surplus money, based on information supplied by CPW's auditors.

The amount supplied to the city includes \$50,000 to cover the utility bills for the Federal Building.

Also, in the most recent electric

rate survey of the state's municipal electric systems, CPW was found to have the third-lowest electric rates in South Carolina. Only Orangeburg and Bamberg had lower rates.

Bennettsville had the highest rates of Palmetto State municipal systems, while Abbeville had the fifth highest.

CPW will have a public hearing at 5:30 p.m. today to hear comment on the prospect of the board voting to raise utility rates. The meeting will be at the CPW building on Court Avenue in Greenwood.