

# Cliffs still questioned

Greenville Journal

9/12/08

BY CHARLES SOWELL

staff writer

The Cliffs at Mountain Park's modified plan for disposal of treated wastewater came under fire last week at Travelers Rest High School as environmental activists and neighboring landowners questioned the appropriateness of moving the sewage drip irrigation field away from the luxury golf course and into the mountains.

The disposal of sewage at the golf course and development have sparked protest for nearly a year since plans were disclosed for dumping about 175,000 gallons of treated sewage a day into the North Saluda River.

The outcry was so great that, after a hearing at North Greenville University earlier this year, the plan was changed to using the treated sewage to irrigate the golf course and some of the public areas around it.

Dumping the treated sewage into the river remained an option in case of an emergency.

The Cliffs now proposes deeding land and responsibility for treating and disposing of the wastewater to JACABB Utilities, the contractor for building the system. JACABB would daily pump about 120,000 gallons of treated sewage uphill to sites a quarter mile from the river. The wastewater would be dispersed over about 30 acres of wooded mountainside that drains back into the North Saluda.

Holding the wastewater in a tank, or pond, remains the only option for dealing with the sewage in case of emergency such as prolonged rain or sub-freezing temperatures. DHEC would require seven days of storage.

Cliffs Vice President Don Nickell said he was puzzled by the opposition. Moving the irrigation field high into the hills and off the golf course was a response to concerns expressed during the last state DHEC hearing, he said.

Pumping wastewater up the mountain will be more expensive and will also take away a potential source of irrigation leaving open the options of tapping into

a large Greenville Water System pipeline running through the property or pumping from the river.

The Cliffs reported to DHEC they had pumped more than 45 million gallons of water from a tributary of the South Pacolet River to irrigate the golf course at the Cliffs at Glassy and more than 28 million gallons from Terry Creek for the Cliffs Valley, a few miles away, according to information obtained through the state Freedom of Information Act.

Dave Hargett, a senior scholar with the Strom Thurmond Institute, reviewed the water withdrawal data provided by DHEC for golf courses in the Upstate.

Hargett said, "Based on typical summer flows some of these headwaters streams are essentially being pumped nearly dry during the months when they are the most stressed."

Nickell declined to comment on potential sources of water for the Cliffs Mountain Park golf course at the Travelers Rest hearing last week.

During the DHEC hearing several environmentalists questioned the potential impact of Cliffs at Mountain Park water withdrawals and the collective impacts of having six Cliffs developments hugging the spine of the Blue Ridge Escarpment.

Cliffs developments are located from Lake Keowee in Oconee County and Pickens counties and in Greenville County from Pleasant Ridge County Park to Glassy Mountain.

Brad Wyche, executive director of Upstate Forever and former chairman of the DHEC board, urged the agency to get out of its regulatory box and look at the big picture.

He said DHEC has the authority under the U.S. Clean Water Act and state Pollution Control Act to look at all water issues stemming from Cliffs developments and pointed out the "globally recognized significance" of the Blue Ridge Escarpment area demands that the state take action.

Contact Charles Sowell at 679-1208 or [csowell@greenvillejournal.com](mailto:csowell@greenvillejournal.com).