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Table Rock water line OK'd

Environmental groups to appeal DHEC decision

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A project to replace an aging water main in Greenville County can proceed now that a state board has upheld the permit over the objections of five environmental groups, who say they will take their appeal to the next level.

The groups appealed Greenville Water System's plans to put a new 42-inch main from Table Rock Reservoir 7.8 miles to a pumping station off Pumpkintown Road, saying they want to protect wildlife habitat and recreation areas.

But the state Board of Health and Environmental Control voted unanimously Thursday to allow the project, said Thom Berry, spokesman for the state Department of Health and Environmental Control.

Berry said the appeal centered around a request for DHEC to impose a minimum flow rate on water flowing out of the reservoir into the South Saluda River, but that the board decided it doesn't have the authority to do that.

Brad Wyche, executive director of Upstate Forever, said the groups disagree, and will take the appeal to the Administrative Law Court.

"We believe there is substantial authority under existing regulation to require minimum flow release," he said.

Wyche added that the board declined to consider other aspects of the appeal without explanation, including strengthening the permit conditions to ensure better environmental protection. Also appealing were the Sierra Club, Save Our Saluda, the South Carolina Native Plant Society and the South Carolina Wildlife Federation.

Lyndon B. Stovall, general manager of the water system, said the existing mains were installed in the 1930s and need to be replaced. He said the decision was expected and added the utility will now finish the plans and solicit bids for the project, which could begin this summer.