



June 15, 2009

## Judge wants residents' input on PCB remedy

Upstate Forever weighs becoming involved in ending clean-up delay

*By Anna Simon  
Clemson bureau*

U.S. District Judge G. Ross Anderson Jr. said Monday at he hopes local residents with specialized knowledge will attend next month's hearing concerning delays in removing two dams and PCB-contaminated sediment behind them from the Twelve Mile River.

Anderson told *The Greenville News* he hopes residents with expertise on the issue will be present "to keep the court advised on the feasibility of correcting these problems."

The removal of the dams is part of a 2006 natural resource damage settlement and is tied to a Superfund cleanup plan to reduce PCB contamination in Lake Hartwell, where health advisories warn against eating certain types of fish caught in the waters.

The hearing is set for 10 a.m. on July 7 at the federal courthouse in Anderson.

Brad Wyche, executive director of Upstate Forever, said the non-profit organization is considering filing a motion in the case — an action Anderson said would deserve "serious consideration" — because the "quasi-public group" has "the environmental interests of the state as one of their prime objectives."

"We are very concerned about the lack of progress in doing the work required by the consent decree. We are pleased that Judge Anderson is holding a hearing," Wyche said.

Upstate Forever is "seriously considering whether we should take specific steps to make the court aware of our concern about the lack of progress," Wyche said.

Last week, Anderson ordered Schlumberger Technology Corp. and government agencies back into his courtroom for a status conference to account for their progress. It has been more than three years since the judge ordered removal of the dams that are still in place.

"I want to see if there is any reasonable excuse for a three-year delay and to pass on the feasibility of what they have proposed," Anderson said.

"I want somebody to tell me what is feasible, what is not feasible and what is the best solution."

More than 400,000 pounds of PCBs were released between 1955 and 1977 from the former Sangamo Weston capacitor manufacturing plant in Pickens, now owned by Schlumberger, into Town Creek, a tributary of the Twelve Mile that flows into Lake Hartwell. The Superfund remedy, called natural capping, allows fresh sediment to flow downstream to Lake Hartwell and bury the contamination.

The delay centers on how much sediment from behind the dams would be released into the river and how it would be released. Trustees are concerned with the impact on the waterway, fish and other wildlife, Ross Self, chief of freshwater fisheries for the state Department of Natural Resources told

*The News* . DNR is the lead of six federal and state agencies named in the settlement as trustees.

Self said he understands the concern over the delay for those “looking in” from the outside, However having been “on the inside” Self said, “I can see why it's taken as long.”

Trustees “probably share some of the public's frustration in the amount of time that it's taken,” Self said.

Joe Ferguson, Schlumberger project manager, said the initial proposed work involves removal of wooden flashboards on the lower dam and letting sediment behind them go downstream over a period of time. Results would be monitored, and the process would stop if there are problems and corrections would be made, Ferguson said.

Trustees and local residents fear slugs of sediment could form in the river, constricting movement of fresh sediment to the lake and potentially harming aquatic life.

A court document in the 2006 settlement specifies that sediment behind the dams would be removed and properly disposed of during dredging operations.

Ferguson couldn't be reached for comment Monday.

---