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By Andrew Moore (Contact / Staff Bio) July 8, 2009 - 12:25 a.m. EST

ANDERSON — United States District Judge G. Ross Anderson Jr. has instructed Schlumberger Technology Corporation attorney John Hanson to formally submit a design plan for removing two dams on Twelve Mile River by the end of August...

A public hearing on Tuesday at the federal courthouse in Anderson highlighted Judge Anderson's disdain for Schlumberger's failure to remove the dams along with polychlorinated biphenyl-contaminated sediment more than three years after he instructed the company to do so in a 2006 consent decree.

For more than two decades, a manufacturing facility on the river pumped hundreds of thousands of pounds of PCBs into the river's tributaries. The river feeds into Lake Hartwell, the bottom of which is covered by PCB-contaminated sediment from the river's toxic flow.

Anderson has given Schlumberger until July 2010 to remove the dams, and is also demanding the company turn over all quarterly progress reports on the project to him so that he may in turn immediately release them to the media and general public.

Anderson said he would assume full control of the project after Schlumberger's apparent circumventing of his 2006 order.

"I'm not an engineer," he said. "But this is what you get into when you stoop to fooling a federal court."

Brad Wyche, executive director of conservation group Upstate Forever, told Anderson he also believed the delays in the project were intentional.

"I think it's clear what's been going on," Wyche said.

At the heart of the delays were a series of changes in project managers as well as contractors for the job. Joe Carroll of Restoration Systems, the contractor initially tapped for the project, told Anderson the contract was terminated when he was reluctant to sign an 85-page amendment to an originally 15-page agreement.

"They may live to regret that," Anderson said of Schlumberger's departure from the plan consistent with his consent decree.

Lawrence Dyck, a retired Clemson University science professor and Twelve Mile River resident, said he was skeptical about the supposed progress Schlumberger had made.

"We're no closer to removing those dams than when you signed those decrees in 2006," Dyck said. We're maybe farther away."

Anderson emphasized at the end of the hearing that there was no more time to "fool around" with his order, and that he was taking the reins of the project himself.

"Frankly, I don't trust you," he said, as he looked toward Schlumberger's legal team.

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