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## Twelve Mile Creek dam removal unlikely

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By Andrew Moore (Contact / Staff Bio)  
October 13, 2009 - 09:25 p.m. EST

ANDERSON — Federal District Court Judge G. Ross Anderson Jr. heard arguments Tuesday over the merits of removing a third dam from the PCB-polluted Twelve Mile Creek in Pickens County, but Natural Resources Trustees' attorney Paul League said they did not favor the expensive measure.

Twelve Mile Creek, which begins in northern Pickens County and runs through Clemson and into Lake [Hartwell](#), was contaminated from 1955 to 1977 by hundreds of thousands of pounds of polychlorinated biphenyls, or PCBs, which were dumped there by the Sangamo-[Weston](#) capacitor manufacturing site, now owned by Schlumberger Technology Corp.

In a 2006 consent decree, Schlumberger paid a settlement of \$12.49 million to a committee of trustees, who would then use the money to help correct the environmental damage done to the waterway through selected projects.

That decree also required Schlumberger to remove the contaminated sediment from the riverbed and take down two of the three dams on the river to allow fresh sediment to naturally cap the polluted bottom of Hartwell, where an advisory against eating fish in those waters has been in place for years. A furious Anderson admonished Schlumberger for still having not removed the dams this past July, and required them to submit a final plan for their removal.

League confirmed during the hearing that Schlumberger's contractors mobilized crews at the two dam sites Tuesday, and resolved a potential problem of some 50,000 cubic yards of sediment that could have been strewn about the banks of the creek during the operations.

While the two dam sites, known as Woodside I and Woodside II, are in line to be removed, a third dam farther upstream may stay put for now.

Groups like the Lake Hartwell Association, Upstate Forever and Pickens Soil and Water Conservation District want the dam, which creates a reservoir for the Easley-Central Water District, removed along with the first two.

But League said Tuesday the trustees' review led them to the conclusion that such a project would not be the best way to spend the settlement money.

"That (the first two dams' removal) itself is a significant and major project," League said.

"Removal of the Easley-Central dam is not necessary to implement remediation of PCB contamination as directed by the Environmental Protection Agency, or to compensate for losses in recreational fishing services."

But Anderson pressed the attorney over what he had called a "small" amount of PCBs behind the third dam.

"Even a small amount of PCBs is still dangerous," Anderson said.

League said the trustees had determined that a sluice gate at the Easley-Central site had allowed for periodical [flushing](#) of sediments, but that fact had Clemson professor Larry Dyck arguing against the dam's presence.

"Rest assured, when you open up these sluices gates we've heard so much about, you'll release massive amounts of sediment," Dyck said, showing photos of portions of Twelve Mile Creek choked with [islands](#) of sludge. Dyck believes only the free flow of the river can effectively allow sediments to distribute down the creek and ultimately into Lake Hartwell.

Frank Holleman, representing Upstate Forever and Lake Hartwell Association, and Dyck were among those leading the charge to remove the dam, saying it would free up the rest of the river, allowing for fishing and recreation for more than 100 miles of streams and tributaries in Twelve Mile's watershed.

Money, however, remains at the heart of the issue, as the Easley-Central Water District requires any removal of the dam to be followed up with a replacement out-of-stream reservoir, including associated piping and pump systems, which would increase the cost of the project by at least \$4 million. League said trustees do not believe what they consider only a "limited nexus" between the dam and the damage done to recreational angling in the area warrants making such an investment in

**Photo**  
*Click on photo to enlarge*



Jessica Nelms

Jessica Nelms | Staff Twelve Mile Creek, which begins in Pickens County and runs through Clemson and into [Lake Hartwell](#), was contaminated from 1955 to 1977 by hundreds of thousands of pounds of polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs).

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the dam's removal.

Anderson said he would make a suggestion to the trustees regarding the third dam, but may not have the authority to affirmatively order them how to use the settlement money.

According to a 1992 study, the most recent one of its kind in the area, more than 700,000 fishing hours are spent on Lake Hartwell every year. But anglers generally cannot eat their catches, which is likely not to change for years, regardless of the steps being taken along Twelve Mile. Dyck said EPA estimates show the PCB levels may not reach a safe threshold from anywhere from 10 to 28 years, depending on the areas of the lake, and even at that point fish contaminated with the PCBs can live roughly 10 years.

"The fish advisory for the lake will still be in place for some considerable amount of time," League said.

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