

PCB dam money could move if Pickens balks

Environmental groups, water
system ready to lead PCB project

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A federal judge said \$3 million of a PCB settlement he recommended for removal of a third Twelve Mile River dam could go elsewhere if Pickens County isn't interested in the project.

"They've got a different take on it than I thought they did," said U.S. District Judge G. Ross Anderson Jr. after the County Council sent a proposal to be the lead agency in removal of the third dam back to committee.

"I thought they supported it, but if they don't, there's nothing we can do about it. It's purely their decision and that money will go somewhere else," Anderson said.

The council wants the dam removed, however some council members are leery of taking a lead role in the project before address-

ing concerns over liability for storage of contaminated sediment from behind the dam and two lower dams, said council member Jennifer Willis, who heads the committee.

Council member Jim London, who brought the proposal, said he was surprised by the opposition and fears that if the county doesn't "have something on the table it won't be considered when the trustees make their allocation."

Three environmental groups working with the county and the Easley-Central Water District, which owns and operates the contested dam, said they are moving forward as co-sponsors without the county.

Settlement trustees will meet Jan. 11 to begin finalizing funding allocations, said Ross Self, trustee

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DAM

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Council chair.

Lack of a project sponsor was one reason cited by settlement trustees for not funding removal of the third dam.

"There's not going to be an issue about sponsorship," said Brad Wych, executive director of Upstate Forever. "We hope that the county would eventually come on board."

Upstate Forever, the Lake Hartwell Association, the Pickens Soil and Water

Conservation District and the Easley-Central Water District are preparing a proposal as co-sponsors to submit to settlement trustees in the next few days, said Larry Dyck, Hartwell association board member and conservation district commissioner.

Anderson has recommended that \$3 million of a \$9 million settlement stemming from PCB damages to the Twelve Mile and Lake Hartwell be used to remove the Easley-Central dam. Trustees list the project as unfunded in a draft plan.

Supporters say removal of the third dam, which

would leave a free flowing river, is the only project in the draft plan with the potential to reduce toxic PCBs from the river and Lake Hartwell, where health advisories warn against eating certain fish.

In the 2006 settlement for natural resource damages, Anderson ordered Schlumberger Technology Corp. to remove the two lower dams and dispose of the sediment behind them. Schlumberger owns the former Sangano-Weston capacitor manufacturing site in Pickens that released more than 400,000 pounds of PCBs into a Twelve Mile tributary be-

tween 1955 and 1977.

Work is nearly complete on a nearby disposal site for contaminated sediment from behind the two dams. Dredging should start around the end of January or early February, said Stephen Harris, a Schlumberger spokesman.

The sediment disposal site was a stumbling block for some County Council members.

Willis said council members were unaware until recently that it would be a permanent landfill site and are concerned about future liability if the county leads the separate but related project.

"What happens when we have the rains we've had the last few months, and we have flash floods and we've got that water, we've got that dirt potentially contaminating groundwater, leaching back into the lake, that's where the big concerns are," Willis said.

Schlumberger "has been fully engaged" with state health officials and the county on required permitting and regulatory issues associated with the project including the disposal site, Harris said.

Schlumberger is solely responsible for maintenance and management of the site for "at least 30

years," Harris said.

The state's 30-year requirement can be extended longer if necessary "to deal with any issues that may occur," said Kent Coleman, director of mining and solid waste management for the state Department of Health and Environmental Control. And because this is a federal Superfund site, Schlumberger remains responsible in perpetuity, Coleman said.

Willis said the committee will meet soon to get answers and hopefully will be able to make a recommendation at the next council meeting, on Jan. 4.