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Pickens to look at liability in PCB case

Coalition moves
forward with
proposal for use of
settlement funds

By Anna Simon

CLEMSON BUREAU
asimon@greenvillenews.com

PICKENS — Pickens County Council may get some answers Monday to liability fears regarding a county role in removal of a third dam and sediment behind it from the Twelve Mile River, but no action appears on the agenda for the 6:30 p.m. meeting.

A proposal to be lead sponsor for removal of the Easley-Central dam was sent to committee after liability concerns were raised at the last council meeting. Jennifer Willis, the committee chair, said committee members were unable to meet during the holiday season.

Council concerns centered on potential liability for PCB-contaminated sediment. Willis said the council should get updates from staff on the issue Monday and the committee will meet later.

Meanwhile, the clock is ticking on a possible \$3 million of a \$9 million PCB-related settlement for damage caused by PCB contamination of the Twelve Mile and Lake Hartwell, where health advisories are posted warning against eating certain fish likely to carry PCBs in their fat.

The Easley-Central Water District, Lake Hartwell Association, Pickens Soil and Water Conservation District and Upstate Forever are moving ahead on a proposal without the county.

"We feel we have a strong proposal that's going forward," said Larry Dyck, a Lake Hartwell Association board member and river restoration expert who lives on the Twelve Mile. With assistance from an engineering firm, "A number of options are being presented."

Supporters of removal of the third dam say it is the only project proposed for the \$9 million that has potential to reduce toxic PCBs in the river and Lake Hartwell. Two lower dams are being removed by Schlumberger Technology Corp. under the settlement. Dredging of sediment from behind the lower dams should start in late January or early February.

Lack of a project sponsor was one reason cited by settlement trustees for not funding removal of the third dam in a draft plan. Settlement trustees will meet Jan. 11 to begin finalizing plans for the \$9 million. A federal judge has recommended that \$3 million be used toward removal of the third dam.

More than 400,000 pounds of polychlorinated biphenyls, or PCBs, were released into Town Creek between 1955 and 1977 from the former Sangamo-Weston capacitor manufacturing site in Pickens, now owned by Schlumberger Technology Corp.