

[print](#)

County says no to heading up dam removal effort

by Sandy Foster

01.05.10 - 11:43 am

PICKENS — While County Council has previously passed a resolution in support of removing a third dam along the Twelve Mile River, they voted Monday night to not to take action as a party in the efforts of that removal.

The group also agreed to ask a federal judge to take actions to ensure that PCBs from sediment being removed behind two other dams will not contaminate the area surrounding a

dump site being used to store the soil.

Council member Jennifer Willis made the motions following a lengthy executive session that included a legal briefing.

As part of a settlement, Schlumberger Technologies, who took on the liability of the cleanup of the contaminated river, Lake Hartwell and the old Sangamo plant site where the PCBs were manufactured, is paying for the removal of the two Woodside dams as part of a settlement for damages done to natural resources.

And they paid a total of \$11.8 million to be used in South Carolina and Georgia to fund projects designed to compensate the public for injury to the fishery and habitat caused by the PCB contamination.

A total of \$9 million is to be spent in South Carolina, primarily on new fishing opportunities such as ponds and piers, but none of the funds have been set aside for the third dam's removal, which several local environmental groups and the EPA endorses.

None of the \$9 million is currently slated to be spent in Pickens County, where the contamination originated, with most of it planned for projects in Anderson County.

A proposal was made that the Natural Resource Trustees set aside \$3 million of the funds be put toward the third dam's removal, with Pickens County leading the project as a partnership with several environmental groups, including Upstate Forever, the Lake Hartwell Association and the Pickens County Soil & Water Conservation District, as well as Easley-Central Water.

But council voted down the proposal.

Councilman Randy Crenshaw told The Sentinel he didn't think the county should be involved because of potential liabilities that could be created by removing the soil from behind the third dam.

He also said that if the county had taken part, it would have been responsible for coming up with the rest of the estimated \$7.7 million it would take to remove the dam.

Crenshaw, who was the only councilman who voted against the county endorsing the removal of the dam, also questioned the motives behind the environmental groups' desire to have it removed, saying the primary motive was for recreational purposes.

Crenshaw said one area paddling group wants to develop a park and walking trail along the Twelve Mile if the river is restored to its natural flow by the removal of all three dams.

Dr. Jim London, who represents the Clemson area, said in an e-mail to fellow council members, that he had pushed for the Trustees to set aside the \$3 million for the third dam's removal and that the proposal came about because DNR attorneys said one would have to be submitted.

London said there was no question that Pickens County received less consideration and compensation than it is due given the damages imposed on the county.

"We can fault EPA, DHEC, the Trustees and DNR, but the question is where do we go from here," he said.

Prior to Monday's vote, London stated in the e-mail that the county's participation would have "added some stature" to the proposal and that it would have made possible federal funding an option.

He said the Natural Resource Trustees will discuss the allocations of the funds on Jan. 11 and that the other groups included in the proposal were prepared to go forward with a submission without the county's help.

London called an endorsement by the county, short of actual participation, a "second best option."

"There are a lot of interested parties looking to see which way we go on this issue, so whatever action we take should be done in a way that leaves open the possibility of part of the settlement coming to Pickens County," London stated in the e-mail. "Otherwise, all of the money will be committed to projects on the other side of the lake."

In her motion, Willis said council's endorsement of the third dam's removal would pave way for a non-profit to form a limited liability corporation to head up efforts to remove the Easley-Central Water dam.

Crenshaw said he felt it would be "awfully irresponsible of the trustees not to remove the third dam and spend all the money in other counties."

Along with deciding not to take part in the effort to remove the third dam, council also plans to ask federal Judge G. Ross Anderson and the Natural Resource Trustees to set aside a trust fund above and beyond all monies already committed to the removal of the other two dams to be used to monitor and maintain for

perpetuity the site on the Dallas Ball property where sediment is being stored.

They also plan to ask that the company comply with the county's stormwater ordinance, coming to the county for approval, and that the EPA and DHEC be required to treat the area being used to store the sediment as a Class III landfill.

DHEC and Schlumberger officials had previously told the Planning Commission that they did not consider the area to be a landfill, but instead a natural swale with trees planted.

Several members of the public, including former county administrator Tom Hendricks and former County Councilman Ben Trotter, spoke out against the county being involved in the removal of the third dam, and they expressed concerns about sediment for the Ball site washing back into the river.

Trotter said the county had bridges that needed to be fixed and that the county's efforts should be directed there instead of finding funding for the third dam's removal.

He also said that unless the leakage of PCBs into the Twelve Mile River from the plant site is completely stopped, any remediation efforts will be undone by further contamination.

© pickenssentinel.com 2010