

Residents support removal of dam

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Trustees finalizing spending plan hope to finish in a few weeks

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More than half of the people who answered a public survey regarding a \$9 million PCB settlement want some money used toward removal of a third Twelve Mile River dam — a project *The Greenville News* reported earlier has received no funding despite supporters' cries that it is critical to healing decades of carcinogenic PCB contamination.

Of the more than 2,800 who took the survey, 53 percent favor reallocating money for removal of the dam, according to results obtained under the Freedom of Information Act. That result and the support of a federal judge who has recommended that \$3 million of the money go to the project were on the table as trustees began deliberations Monday to finalize a spending plan.

Trustees want to meet as soon as possible with four groups that proposed to jointly sponsor the dam removal project to "flesh out" answers to some questions, said Ross Self, chief of freshwater fisheries with the state Department of Natural Resources, and trustee chair.

Removal of the third dam currently is unfunded in the trustees' draft plan. The issue resurfaced at a hearing called by U.S. District Judge G. Ross Anderson Jr. after

the newspaper reported that the \$9 million paid by Schlumberger Technology Corp. in the 2006 settlement hadn't yet been used and that two lower dams on the Twelve Mile the judge had ordered Schlumberger to remove were still standing.

Work to remove the two lower dams now has started with construction of a disposal site for contaminated sediment from behind the two lower dams. Trustees hope to finalize the spending plan for the \$9 million compensation for natural resource damages in the next three to four weeks, Self said.

"We look forward to the opportunity to meet with the trustees and discuss any matters that are on their minds," said Larry Dyck, a river restoration expert and a board member of the Lake Hartwell Association, one of the co-sponsors. Other co-sponsors are Upstate Forever, Pickens County Soil and Water Conservation District and the Easley-Central Water District.

Self deferred comment on decisions on funding any specific projects until trustees release the final document.

The settlement stems from PCB contamination of the Twelve Mile and Lake Hartwell, where health advisories are posted warning against eating certain fish likely to carry

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DAM

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PCBs in their fat.

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

Of 2,844 respondents to the public survey, 53.4 percent said some of the settlement should be re-allocated to partially fund removal

of the Easley-Central dam.

Of a total of 2,848 people who went online to the survey during the public comment period or who filled out the survey at a public meeting, only four skipped the question of whether money should be reallocated for removal of the third dam.

Links to the survey were widely circulated online by organizations including environmental groups, fishing clubs, water districts, state agencies and county governments soliciting and vying for support for the various proposals.

Proposals to enhance

fish habitat, public access and fishing piers at Lake Hartwell received the strongest support of five fishery-related projects selected for funding in the draft plan.

The fish habitat proposal received "strong support" from 53.1 percent of respondents, and the proposal to enhance public access and fishing piers received "strong support" from 41.2 percent of respondents.

Of the remaining projects selected for funding in the draft plan, 32.1 percent gave strong support to a Green Pond event center, 30.9 percent gave strong

support to a Hartwell Tailrace fishing access project, and 23.7 percent gave strong support to an off-site recreational fishing proposal.

A second proposal unfunded in the draft plan, for re-allocation of money to partially fund a Water Education and Environmental Center, was supported by 26.5 percent of respondents.

Many of the 1,302 people who wrote comments in addition to checking answers on the first part of the survey said removal of the third dam was the one proposal that directly ad-

"Don't divert fishing money to create a kayaker area or a water supply center."

Survey response

dressed the PCB contamination.

"This is the only project that has the potential of actually improving the Hartwell fishery permanently and addressing the cause

of the problem, PCBs," one respondent wrote.

"It also has the benefit of restoring the natural environment, expanding and restoring the fishery, opening up 100 miles of river system and fishery, and creating a great natural and recreational resource."

Others voiced opposition. "Taking the third dam out would mainly benefit kayakers. The money is intended to improve fishing. Stick to projects that improve fishing. Don't divert fishing money to create a kayaker area or a water supply center," one respondent wrote.