

# Third-dam compromise could clean lake

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Public has backed removal; judge urges trustees 'to move rapidly'

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After years of wrangling over the cost of removing a third dam that supporters say is critical to cleaning PCB contamination from the Twelve Mile River and Lake Hartwell, a new compromise cuts the cost by opening part of the river and leaving part of the dam in place.

The key is finding out how much sediment is behind the dam and how contaminated it is.

To get the answers, plan sponsors want \$300,000 of a \$9 million PCB settlement.

They have requested \$4 million of the settlement to fund the project but need to start work now because they want to tie in with a court-ordered removal of two lower dams on the Twelve Mile, where work has started.

The \$9 million court-ordered settlement paid by Schlumberger Technology Corp. in 2006 remains unspent, and trustees say



KEN OSBURN / Staff

A compromise would remove part of the Easley-Central dam on the 12 Mile River.

they will finalize a spending plan soon. The third dam is unfunded in a draft plan that trustees released in

October that awards the money to recreational fishing enhancements.

"I still want them to move

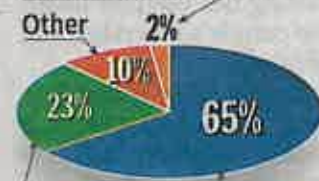
rapidly," U.S. District Judge G. Ross Anderson Jr., who ordered the settlement, told *The Greenville News* on Thursday. "This has been hanging around too long."

The new plan "sounds intelligent," said Anderson, who has recommended that \$3 million of the settlement go toward removal of the third dam.

Proponents believe removing the dam — the final impediment to a free-flowing river — is the only proposal on the table that would heal a legacy of contamination and health advi-

**Public wants third Twelve Mile River dam removed**

Water Education and Environmental Center



Recreational fishing enhancements

Source: The Greenville News analysis of 1,302 written comments submitted to PCB settlement spending survey

SUZIE RIDDLE / Staff

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sories that have been posted for decades warning against eating certain fish caught in the water.

An analysis by *The Greenville News* of 1,302 written comments submitted to trustees in a recent public opinion survey found 65 percent favor removal of the third dam.

"The problem of the PCBs cannot be alleviated until the third dam is removed. Therefore, this is the most critical project," one resident wrote.

A total of 2,844 people filled out the survey obtained by *The News* under the Freedom of Information Act. Of those, 53.4 percent checked boxes to support reallocation of some settlement money toward removal of the Easley-Central dam.

The survey also included space for written comments, where the 1,302 people responded.

"Removing the Easley-Central Dam is the only project that will reduce PCBs in Lake Hartwell. The dam removal will also result in a scenic free-flowing river, open space for outdoor activities, clean water, and healthier fish and wildlife," one resident wrote.

Others supported fishing enhancements funded in the trustees' draft proposal. "Recreational fishing is a great industry that brings money into the economy and is a great way to keep kids out of trouble," a supporter of the draft plan wrote.

"Our area needs a megaramp dearly. Too many big tournaments are bypassing this lake, and that needs to change," another wrote.

The compromise plan to remove part of the dam and cut the project cost brings those who want to remove the dam and settlement trustees "to a point where I wish we'd have been two years ago," said Ross Self, head of freshwater fisheries for the state Department of Natural Resources and chair of the trustee council.

"We'll move ahead with all due haste," Self said.

tion, said Bill Stephens, a principal with Kestrel Horizons, a Greenville and Charleston-based engineering firm working with dam removal proponents. The amount of sediment is unknown, Kestrel said.

The cost has been a barrier to removal of the dam going back to negotiations prior to the 2006 court order.

The new plan slashes the cost from an estimated \$5 million to \$4.4 million by eliminating the need for a new impoundment and pumping equipment for the water district. It is sponsored jointly by Upstate Forever, the Lake Hartwell Association, the Pickens Soil and Water Conservation District and the Easley Central Water District.

The new plan would open the west side of the river to run free and leave a small part of the dam in place on the east side.

An earthen dam would be built perpendicular to the remaining part of the existing dam, connecting it to a floodplain upstream. Some water would be diverted from the river into a new channel to be dredged at the east edge of the floodplain and into the newly created impoundment while the west side of the river would run free.

Anderson's 2006 order listed removal of the third dam as a consideration for the \$9 million paid by Schlumberger to compensate for lost resources including contamination of fish in Lake Hartwell. Between 1955 and 1977, 400,000 pounds of PCBs were released from the former Sangamo-Weston capacitor manufacturing site in Pickens now owned by Schlumberger.

Anderson asked trustees at an October hearing if there is any evidence of PCBs at the third dam. "A small amount of PCBs is still dangerous," he said after hearing that a small amount of contamination is possible.

Anderson has recommended splitting the \$9 million equally between fishing enhancements, dam removal and a Water Education and Environmental Center that also is currently unfunded.