

VOICES

THE GREENVILLE NEWS EDITORIAL

Use money to remove third dam

Any plan to remove PCBs from the Twelve Mile River and Lake Hartwell should include the removal of a third dam on the river and sediment behind it. A compromise plan would do just that and would accomplish what a majority of area residents desire.

That compromise calls for the removal of a portion of the dam and the sediment behind it, according to a recent report in *The Greenville News*. The compromise would reduce the cost of the dam removal and seems a reasonable way to mitigate the PCB contamination while preserving some of the settlement money for other uses. The plan's sponsors should be allowed to use a \$300,000 portion of settlement to make sure the plan is feasible.

Removal of the third dam was not funded in a draft proposal that was released in the fall. That plan calls for a significant portion of the \$9 million settlement to be used for

several expensive, recreation-oriented projects that won't help mitigate PCBs in the Twelve Mile or Hartwell. While the projects are generally good ideas, the settlement money should be used first to ensure that the contaminants are removed from these waterways.

In fact, 65 percent of people with an interest in the project say they want the settlement spent on removing the third dam. That's according to 1,302 written comments submitted to trustees that *The Greenville News* obtained through the Freedom of Information Act.

The money comes from a \$9 million settlement over the release of 400,000 pounds of PCBs from the former Sango-Weston capacitor plant on a tributary of the Twelve Mile.

PCBs, or polychlorinated biphenyls, are cancer-causing chemicals that were used in the manufacturing of capacitors. They are

carcinogens and a proven environmental danger. Not only do they put people at risk, they harm wildlife and diminish the recreation potential of areas in which they're present. PCBs in the Twelve Mile and Hartwell have led to advisories to not eat some fish from those waterways.

An original plan was to use the settlement to remove PCB-laden sediment from behind two dams in the river, then remove the dams themselves. That plan had not been followed, prompting Judge G. Ross Anderson Jr. to push for new action to remove the dams and the sediment within a year.

Anderson has urged that the third dam be removed with a portion of the settlement, and he's absolutely right. Removing the third dam would allow the river to flow more freely and eventually wash fresh sediment down the river and into Hartwell. It also

would create better fish habitats and enhance recreation potential of the river.

The latest compromise helps reduce the cost of the dam removal to \$4.4 million from an estimated \$5 million. The compromise plan is supported by Upstate Forever, the Hartwell Association, the Pickens Soil and Water Conservation District and the Easley Central Water District.

A plan to spend the \$9 million settlement paid in 2006 by Schlumberger Technology Corp. is expected to be finalized soon. The priority for that plan needs to be to spend the money on clean-up first — including the third dam — with enhancements like those in the draft plan to follow if the settlement allows.

To that end, this compromise plan should be approved so steps can be taken to ensure the Twelve Mile and Hartwell are cleaned up and preserved for generations to come.