



PAUL BROWN

Businessman George Wolfes says delays in dam removal are stalling his plans to build condos by the river.

# Twelve Mile dam project drifts into next year

Judge had set deadline for this month

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**CATEECHEE** — Two dams on the Twelve Mile River originally ordered for removal in a 2006 settlement stemming from PCB contamination in the river and Lake Hartwell remain standing even after a federal judge last July set a timetable requiring their demolition within a year.

Eight years after buying the old Cateechee Mill, George Wolfes, an Atlanta businessman who wants to convert the former textile plant into condominiums overlooking the river, wonders if they will ever come down. The dams once provided electricity to the plant, and one is adjacent to his property.

"I bought the mill to make money on it," Wolfes said. "Every time it gets held up, it's just another delay for me."

The dams will be removed after dredging of potentially contaminated sediment behind them is completed, said Stephen Harris, spokesman for Schlumberger Technology Corp. That is expected to happen in January, he said.

Approximately 40,000 cubic yards of sediment have been dredged and piped to a permanent disposal site on private property across the river from the former textile plant, and an estimated 360,000 cubic yards of sediment still must be removed, Harris said.

U.S. District Judge G. Ross Anderson Jr. knew when he called Schlumberger back to court last July and set a one-year timetable that he was imposing a tight, if not impossible, schedule, he told *The Greenville News* on

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Wednesday.

Anderson said he set the timetable to motivate action after learning through coverage by *The News* that after more than three years his order hadn't been carried out.

Anderson, who recently visited the work site on the river, said two special receivers he appointed to monitor the progress "did a

magnificent job."

Removing the dams is designed to allow fresh sediment to flow down the Twelve Mile and into Lake Hartwell to cover the PCB-contaminated lake bottom. Health advisories posted at the lake for three decades warn against eating certain types of fish caught in the waters because they contain PCBs, which have been linked to cancer and other health problems.

A proposal to fund removal of a third dam with part of \$9 million paid by Schlumberger in the 2006 settlement continues to

bounce between settlement trustees and project sponsors.

"The proposal reviewed was broader in scope than we had anticipated. As a result, we are contacting the sponsors for clarifying information," said Ross Self, freshwater fisheries chief for the state Department of Natural Resources and chair of the trustee council.

Trustees are beginning to finalize the \$9 million compensation plan and will leave some money "unobligated" while considering the dam removal, Self said.

Project sponsors are making changes requested by trustees, said Larry Dyck, a board member of the Lake Hartwell Association and Pickens Soil and Water Conservation District, two of the sponsors. Other sponsors are Upstate Forever and the Easley-Central Water District.

"There's no question it should be taken out," said Anderson, who has recommended \$3 million of the settlement go toward removing the dam. "We're just kidding ourselves when we say we're going to clean up the river and Hartwell Lake and leave it."