

# Success at the lake?

## DHEC poised to tighten restrictions

**By Judith Brown**

**Staff Writer**

Ten years ago, an algae bloom in the upper channels of Lake Greenwood was so thick turtles and ducks could walk across it. It had been partly due to the high nutrient levels, particularly phosphorous, flowing into the lake, primarily from the Reedy River.

So in April 2009, when Time Magazine ranked the Saluda River in South Carolina as No. 6 among the nation's Top Ten Endangered Rivers, natural resources organizations and a grassroots community organization, Preserving Lake Greenwood (PLG), began making some noise to try and get the Department of Health and Environmental Control to tighten up restrictions for wastewater treatment plants in the Saluda Watershed area. The timing was critical, because the DHEC permits for several of the Saluda River area wastewater treatment plants were up for renewal.

Now, barring any unsuspected bombshells at a Wednesday night public hearing in Greenwood, those efforts may soon come to a successful ending, as DHEC holds its second hearing related to the 35-page document which includes the new restrictions and a plan of action.

The meeting will take place at 6:30 p.m. tonight in Greenwood, according to Karen Boylan, chairman of the board for PLG.

"We hope a lot of people will come out for it," she said. She and other board members of the group, which is composed of representatives from many of the neighborhoods and developments around the

lake, were at the first public hearing last week, which was a question-and-answer session with DHEC officials. Tonight is the second required public hearing and is open for public comment.

So far, Boylan is cautiously optimistic about DHEC's plan.

"We're very excited," Boylan said. "This is a major milestone for us."

Boylan, who lives with her husband Dan in the Crystal Bay development near Cross Hill, wasn't planning to start an entire volunteer organization when she began contacting legislators and friends about the poor water quality issues of Lake Greenwood. After more than a year and a handful of public meetings, PLG has close to 500 concerned residents in its e-mail banks.

John Tynan of Upstate Forever said he is pleased that DHEC took the time to listen and developed a plan to tighten the restrictions on phosphorous flowing into the Saluda.

"What DHEC has proposed is to reissue all 10 of the wastewater permits for Saluda River at the same time," Tynan said, "and they are adding phosphorous restrictions."

Tynan said he felt sure that the work of Upstate Forever and the PLG made a difference.

"I would say that the focus the community brought to the lake and the river made DHEC take a closer look and take a proactive approach to make sure the lake doesn't get any worse," Tynan said. This is a great example of when there's good collaboration between wastewater utilities, DHEC and the community, you can get results."

Last year during initial talks between Upstate Forever and DHEC, DHEC said the equipment to make the changes would be cost prohibitive for the individual treatment plants. But since those talks, Tynan said, ReWa has decided to, over a several-year period, consolidate four of the smaller plants into one larger one, using brand new technology which will reduce nutrient emissions. That in itself will

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make a significant impact, Tynan said. Until then, nine of the 10 treatment plants will be working together to make sure that their total emissions stay within the required levels. Tynan said it involves the nine treatment plants north of the Ware

Shoals plant.

“DHEC has taken a fairly creative approach, and (this is) working to address the pollution problems in the most cost efficient manner,” Tynan said. “They’re pooling their resources and working together.”

Boylan and others active in the PLG are hoping to see more at tonight’s public hearing. It is scheduled for 6:30 p.m., Wednesday, Nov. 10, at the Brewer Community Complex Auditorium on East Cambridge in Greenwood.



File photo by Dr. Dave Hargett

**UNWELCOME BLOOM** — In 1999, drought and heat, combined with excessive nutrients, produced a thick algae bloom in upper portions of Lake Greenwood. Efforts started in April 2009 by Upstate Forever and Preserving Lake Greenwood have helped bring about needed DHEC restrictions for 10 Saluda River waste water treatment plants to try and prevent another such bloom. The final public hearing is in Greenwood tonight.