

Trustees of multi-million dollar PCBs settlement name Hartwell projects

By Anna Mitchell

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ANDERSON COUNTY — A two-state council of trustees controlling nearly \$7 million in settlement funds over the PCB contamination of Hartwell Lake has settled on seven projects.

An announcement this week from the South Carolina Department of Natural Resources listed projects ranging from an event center in Anderson County to a dam-sediment study in Easley. Those involved with the projects said they expect work to get under way early next year.

The \$6.9 million in projects are part of a larger settlement that includes cleanup of contaminated sediment above two dams on Twelve Mile Creek in the Norris-Cateechee community. Another \$2 million was also designated for projects on the Georgia side of the lake.

Glenn Brill, Anderson County's parks, recreation and tourism director, said he could not overstate the importance of the Green Pond Event Center, which will receive \$1.5 million, to the community's economy. Multi-lane ramps draw major fishing tournaments, he said, and Anderson can also deliver hundreds of hotel rooms and plenty of restaurants for visitors, as opposed to so-called mega-ramps already on the Georgia side in Franklin and Hart counties.

"Quite simply, Green Pond is going to be a game changer for us," Brill said. "This will be like what Garrison Arena is to the equine industry."

Located within sight of Portman Marina and just minutes from Interstate 85, the Green Pond site currently has a single-lane boat ramp, parking for 11 cars and parking for 20 vehicles with trailers. It is within eight miles of the city of Anderson, the Civic Center and 25 hotels — all of which factored into the county's desire to expand the launch site.

Anderson County earlier this year received a \$250,000 grant from the state parks department to pay for design and engineering of the Green Pond center. Numbers are not yet firm, county parks department manager Matthew Schell said, but developing all 30 acres could eventually cost up to \$3 million. The county would seek grants and private partnerships to cover costs.

Money for the settlement comes from Schlumberger Technology Corp., which in the 1970s bought a capacitor plant responsible for dumping polychlorinated biphenyls into Twelve Mile Creek, which flows into Hartwell Lake. A 2006 federal consent decree

established how much money Schlumberger had to pay for damages, but it has taken four years to decide how to spend the money here.

PCBs do not dissolve in water but sink into subsurface mud, where bacteria consume it. Once in the food chain, PCBs linger in the fatty tissues of creatures all the way up to the water's top predators — fish such as striped bass.

"I would not serve fish to my daughters who might soon be pregnant," Larry Dyck, a retired Clemson professor and water biologist, said of Hartwell Lake aquatic life. "That's where PCBs have far more critical threshold of influence."

The trustee council that decided where the money would go is made up of representatives from the Georgia Department of Natural Resources, its counterpart in South Carolina, the South Carolina Department of Health and Environmental Control, South Carolina Governors Office, United States Army Corps of Engineers and the United States Fish and Wildlife Service.

Three other projects coming to Anderson are boardwalks and fishing piers at Broyles Recreation Area, Sadlers Creek State Park and Brown Road. More piers are planned for Oconee and Pickens counties.

Dyck said he's been part of the group pushing for a study of sediment about the Easley-Central Dam. The hope eventually is for the dam to be torn down so that Twelve Mile Creek, a major tributary to Hartwell Lake, will flow freely.

Upstate Forever out of Greenville will handle the \$225,000 in settlement money set aside for the study of waters above the dam, with Kestral Horizons engineering firm doing the work.

Contractors for Schlumberger are dredging tons of sediment that has built up almost to the top of the two other dams downstream in Norris, much of it likely tainted from PCBs. Once the mud is gone, the dams can go.

"Our concept to being with is that we want a free-flowing river and we want sediment that comes down the river not to be released artificially in slugs but to go downstream as nature would want it to," Dyck said.

With all three dams gone, Dyck said, dozens of species of fish on both sides of the dams would be able to intermingle for the first time in generations.

"Right now there's not an ability for populations to in fact inter-breed between upstream areas and Lake Hartwell itself, which from a biological standpoint isn't good," Dyck said.

Taking out the Easley-Central Dam would cost millions, Dyck said, which may yet be available from remaining settlement funds if trustees decide to go in that direction.

The natural resources announcement said about \$2.1 million in remaining unobligated funds will be evaluated after study of sediment above the Easley-Central dam is finished.

Trustees picked the seven projects based on how well they met project criteria and public comments. The aim is to compensate the public for losses of recreational fishing as a result of the PCB contamination.



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Hartwell Lake PCBs Settlement Fund Distribution

| | |
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| Monitoring | \$800,000 |
| Stream restoration | \$160,000 |
| Fish habitat enhancement | |
| Deep and shallow-water structures | \$2.8M |
| Wave breaks along shore | |
| Public access and fishing piers | |
| Broyles Recreation Area (Anderson) | |
| Sadlers Creek State Park (Anderson) | |
| Brown Road (Anderson) | |
| Lloyd C. Webb Natural Resources Office (Clemson) | \$1.1M |
| Seneca Creek boat access area (Seneca) | |
| Lake Hartwell State Recreation Area (Fair Play) | |
| Fairplay Recreation Area (Fair Play) | |
| Hartwell tailrace fishing access | |
| 800-foot pedestrian fishing trail on Georgia side of the Savannah River combined with \$600,000 in Georgia's settlement funds | \$300,000 |
| Green Pond Event Center | |
| Six new boat launches | |
| Two courtesy docks and a bathroom | |
| 150 car-trailer parking places | \$1.5M |
| 50 regular parking places | |
| 400-seat shoreline amphitheater | |
| Kayak launch and playground | |
| Easley-Central dam sediment study From Anderson Independent-Mail | \$225,000 |