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Judge disappointed water education center not funded

By Anna Simon • Clemson bureau • Published: December 19, 2010 2:00AM

ANDERSON — While U.S. District Judge G. Ross Anderson Jr. isn't completely happy with the allocation of a \$9 million settlement to help clean contamination from Lake Hartwell and the Twelve Mile River, he wants the money put to use quickly after sitting in an account for four years.

"We want to know how soon they can get this into play," Anderson said.

Anderson said he was disappointed that a proposed water education center wasn't funded.

He was satisfied with \$2.1 million being withheld for future allocation — potentially toward removal of a third, controversial dam on the Twelve Mile River, pending results of a study to determine the extent of PCB contamination behind the dam.

"They left \$2.1 million open. That's a smart idea," Anderson said, although he blasted the necessity of a \$225,000 sediment study.

"You'd have to be a complete idiot not to know what that study is going to show. We know 400,000 pounds of PCBs were discharged. What was there at the other dams will be at this one," Anderson said.

"I guess the government has to have strong evidence, which is not a bad idea," Anderson said, adding that the study really isn't an option.

Supporters of removing the third dam had hoped for \$4.5 million, which is the estimated project cost and comes to half of the restoration account. They were "extremely disappointed" by the outcome, said Brad Wyche, executive director of Upstate Forever, the lead sponsor of the dam project.

"We are not criticizing the other projects. It is just a matter of priority," Wyche said. "They are worthwhile projects. They simply do not compare to removing the third dam and opening up the entire river system, which will benefit the river and Lake Hartwell tremendously."

Anderson had recommended that a third of \$9 million Schlumberger Technology Corp. paid to

South Carolina in the 2006 settlement be used toward removal of the dam owned by the Easley-Central Water District and a third go to the proposed water education center.

Sponsors of the project to remove the dam — Upstate Forever, Pickens County Soil and Water Conservation District, Lake Hartwell Association and the water district — will ask trustees for a reallocation that would leave more funding potentially available for removing the dam, Wyche said.

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