

'Astounded by the beauty'



KEN OSBURN / Staff

Plans for a blueway would turn a free-flowing Twelve Mile River into a miles-long recreation area where people could fish and swim, travel by boat, canoe or kayak, watch birds and wildlife, and picnic and play.

Newly free-flowing Twelve Mile River could become recreation area

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CLEMSON — One visit to the Twelve Mile River made Jeff Martin a crusader in a movement to turn the whitewater corridor and adjoining area of Lake Hartwell into a scenic blueway now that dams are being removed and toxic PCBs are being cleansed from the water.

"I was astounded by the beauty of the Twelve Mile River gorge and the potential that it has as a recreation and tourism site for this county," said Martin, a Pickens County councilman, who like many residents had been unaware of the raw, unfolding beauty of the gorge.

"No one alive today has ever seen that river free-flowing, and we may have an opportunity in our lifetime to see that happen," said Martin, who is encouraging other council members to support the plans.

"We should be very proactive in finding ways to take advantage of these dams being taken down and utilize that resource for the welfare of our citizens," Martin said.

"I sent a note to my fellow

Planned blueway recreation area



SUZIE RIDDLE / Staff

County Council members saying we have an exciting opportunity not only to do the right thing, but an opportunity to provide a service to our community as well as create an economic engine in terms of tourism activity."

Clemson Mayor Larry Abernathy is another passionate advocate for un-

leashing the scenic beauty and economic development potential of the local waters as a blueway.

"I hope this council will join me in my exuberance about that project," Abernathy said. "Any time we have a chance to make flow



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The Twelve Mile River flows over the Easley-Central dam. Removing it would completely open the river corridor. Upstate conservation groups are seeking money to allow demolition of this final dam.

RIVER

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of water in and around Clemson more pure, that's a great thing."

A blueway is a trail, like a greenway, but on water rather than on land. The project builds on a court-ordered river restoration now in progress.

It would more fully develop the river and Twelve Mile area of Lake Hartwell as a recreation area encompassing miles of water where people could fish and swim, travel by boat, canoe or kayak, watch birds and wildlife, and picnic and play.

Two century-old dams and contaminated sediment behind them are being removed from the river as part of a 2006 settlement to clean the waters where posted health advisories warn against eating certain fish likely to carry PCBs. One dam has been removed, and the second is expected to come down this summer.



Several Upstate conservation groups have joined in an effort to remove a third and final dam upstream and are seeking funding from the settlement to completely open the river corridor.

The blueway project was recently accepted by the Rivers, Trails and Conservation Assistance Program of the National Park Service. Public meetings will be held to get residents' input, and a master recreation and restoration plan will be

developed.

The blueway would include the river and parts of Lake Hartwell and Clemson University's Experimental Forest, said Larry Dyck, a member of the steering committee for the blueway project.

Much of the land along the river is private, but Clemson's forest is open to the public.

Rock formations, estuaries, waterfalls and other historical, educational, cultural, geological and natu-

Removing one dam on the Twelve Mile River has allowed the water to cut into the banks at some points, changing the river's bed.

FOLLOW THE RIVER

Follow developments in the removal of the Twelve Mile River dam at GreenvilleOnline.com/TwelveMileDam.

ral sites along the corridor will be included in a map and guide, as well as many recreational opportunities, said Scott Pigeon, a member of the steering committee for the project.

The 2006 settlement stems from the release of more than 400,000 pounds of polychlorinated biphenyls, or PCBs, between 1955 and 1977 from the former a capacitor manufacturing site in Pickens, now owned by Schlumberger Technology Corp.