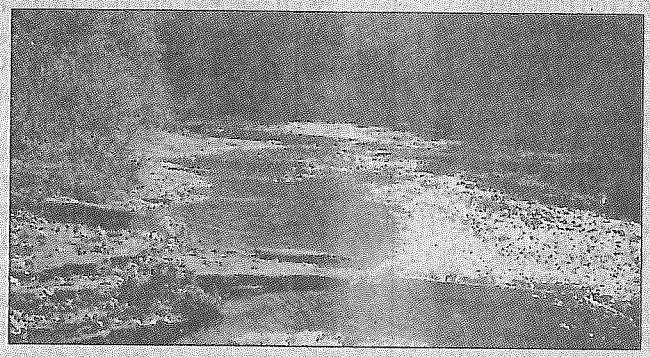
Chauga could see conservation efforts

BY JESSICA SIBLEY
THE JOURNAL

WESTMINSTER — A large area along the Chauga River could be under a protection easement in the near future.

Westminster City Council held a public hearing about a possible conservation easement that could be executed along 118 acres that run on both sides of the river north of Highway 76.

In a conservation easement, a landowner voluntarily agrees to sell or donate certain rights associated with his or her property – often the right to subdivide or develop – and a private organization or public agency agrees to hold the right to enforce the landowner's promise not to exercise those rights. In essence, the rights are forfeited and no longer exist, according to The Nature Conservancy.



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The Chauga River runs through Oconee County.

However, while Administrator David Smith said the public input was all positive, plans to continue with an easement have been stalled.

"There is no movement on the issue since the funding pool is not available at this time," he said. "Whatever covenants that the council should place on the land with the conservation easement would protect the land rather than selling it for development."

And while visions for the possible protection of the land have yet to be ironed out, water quality is certainly a concern.

"This parcel is located several miles outside of town, and is upstream of the city's raw water intake for the city's water treatment plant," Smith said. "The raw water is pumped several miles from the intake to the city's water treatment plant. Water quality is definitely a reason for not having the property developed with asphalt and concrete. The city has been asked to consider a conservation easement to preserve the land as much as possible in its pristine condition."

But for now, the council has not taken further action on the topic.

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