DHEC pulls plug on marina

Public hearings planned

BY CARLOS GALARZA
THE JOURNAL

SALEM — Lake Keowee residents and groups engaged in protecting the lake scored a big victory when state regulators recently backtracked on a permit for a commercial marina off Stamp Creek Road.

A spokesman for the South Carolina Department of Health and Environmental Control said Friday that the permit was rescinded to allow for public hearings on the project.

"We took a step back, paused and realized that all citizens had not had a chance to be heard," said DHEC spokesman Adam Myrick.

Myrick said DHEC would get feedback from the parties involved before scheduling a place and time for the public hearings.

Palmetto Pointe Marina developer Raymond Fretwell of Anderson is having a difficult time trying to come to terms with DHEC's flip-flop.

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FILE PHO

Bowing to pressure from residents and groups calling for public hearings on plans to develop a commercial marina on Lake Keowee off Stamp Creek Road, state regulators rescinded a permit for the project they approved last month. A date and time for the public hearings has yet to be scheduled.

MARINA: Legal action in place

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Fretwell said the agency issued the permit Oct. 6 and took it back Oct. 19.

"I think it's crazy," Fretwell said Friday. "It's a black eye on that agency."

Fretwell applied for the permit through Goldie & Associates in Seneca.

Friends of Lake Keowee Society is leading the opposition against the marina.

FOLKS Executive Director Ben Turetzky said DHEC doesn't frequently reverse its decisions, but he credited the turnaround to the number of letters, faxes and e-mails sent to the agency by members of FOLKS and others.

"We were extremely dissatisfied with the way it (the permit) came down," Turetzky said Friday.

Turetzky said FOLKS also has retained the services of the Corley Law Firm in Walhalla with the intention of challenging the proposed marina before an Administrative Law Court judge.

"There is legal action in place," Turetzky said.

Fretwell said he doesn't see why he has to get himself a lawyer for something that already had been decided.

"The issues FOLKS is raising are the same it has made before," Fretwell said. "If they deny the permit, there's going to be some big time problems."

Fretwell plans to build the marina on a 13-acre tract that he originally wanted to develop into a small subdivision.

Described as a public-use marina, it would include a restaurant, ship's store and four 14-slip docks. The project also includes constructing a swim-beach area.

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Duke forum to talk marina

THE JOURNAL STAFF

SENECA — Friends of Lake Keowee Society intends to have a little fun before getting too serious during a 6 p.m. forum Thursday at the Duke World of Energy.

An initial presentation about "things that go slurp, slither, buzz, gurgle, and oh yes, bump" will be presented by Clemson University Limnologist Dr. John Hains.

The second part of the forum will take a more serious bent, discussing the status of the proposed Palmetto Pointe Commercial Marina on Lake Keowee and then opening the floor to questions.