

Duke to unveil lake recreation measures



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SALEM — The recreation management plan that will guide development on lakes Keowee and Jocassee for years into the future will be unveiled Thursday night.

Duke Energy and Heron Cove Partners will present a final Recreation Management Plan that was filed with the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) on Dec. 23.

The public is invited to the presentation, which begins at 6 p.m. at the Duke World of Energy on S.C. Highway 130.

Upon approval by the FERC, Duke will implement the plan to guide management of existing recreation resources on Lake Keowee and Lake Jocassee through 2016.

According to Bill Graham, president of Friends of Lake Keowee Society (FOLKS), the plan provides a robust schedule for development of numerous recreational enhancements by the end of 2015 at Duke's public access areas, parks in Pickens and Oconee counties and state parks surrounding the lakes.

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In a prepared statement, Graham noted the passive enhancements such as courtesy docks, picnic areas, restrooms and walking trails are all very much in keeping with what interviewees indicated were needed during the Recreation Use and Needs Study (RUNS).

"The management plan slates the improvements to Fall Creek to be completed in 2015 but it is heartening to see the early installation of a courtesy dock," said Graham, noting that several additional recommendations have been made by FOLKS in comments filed with the FERC.

Among those suggestions was that current economic pressures should actually accelerate the planned addition of passive recreation facilities.

FOLKS also urged usage of a boat carrying capacity study,

as well as future population growth projections, to make estimates of future boat capacity on the lakes and to use these measuring sticks as guides in determining any future commercial marina growth. FOLKS has typically opposed commercial marina growth on the lakes.

The main concern FOLKS still has, according to Graham, are provisions in the Duke access plan that provide for extensive commercialization of the access areas.

"It is FOLKS' contention that, although Warpath Landing (a commercial development approved on the Pickens County side of Lake Keowee) may turn out to be a great addition to the lake, it represents a lessening on the amount of public access lands," Graham's statement stated.

As a result of that approval, the organization has said it will "work with both Oconee and Pickens counties to implement lake-side overlays to make it the counties and not the FERC and Duke Energy, which will have the power to decide how much commercialization will take place."

FOLKS has been among several groups that have pushed

the development of a lake overlay in Oconee County's initial zoning enabling ordinance (ZEO), scheduled to take effect on May 1.

Although approved by the Oconee County Council in December, three new members of the council, who took office Jan. 1, have indicated they will revisit the overlay aspect of the ZEO legislation.