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FOLKS stay busy keeping Lake Keowee clean

Staff Reports

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PICKENS COUNTY — We have all heard of cleaning our house from top to bottom, and most people on and around Lake Keowee are accustomed to seeing about 200 FOLKS members and other volunteers with orange vests conducting lake sweeps each spring and fall. Thousands of 40-gallon bags full of all kinds of trash have been taken off the shoreline over the past 18 years by these volunteers.

Jack Lewis, co-commander of the Lake Sweep program and commander of the Adopt an Island program, said, "The overall amount of shoreline trash has been decreasing over the years due to the development of the shoreline but people still leave behind their leftover food, packaging, cans and bottles. Some people are even "nice enough to pick it all up, put it in a plastic bag but then leave it on the shoreline."

Two years ago, FOLKS initiated an Adopt an Island program and have had "parent" volunteers out at least four times a year (twice in conjunction with the spring and fall lake sweeps) and they found that some islands were treated with considerable disrespect. Just as along the shoreline, people left their trash behind on the islands. Jack said that with the 'Use of the Islands' signage that is being erected at the access areas, as well as on the islands by Duke Energy and the frequent visits by the island "parents," there has been some noticeable improvements.

What most people do not know is starting three years ago, a group of divers from North Carolina, many belonging to the Divers of Carolina — sponsored by Cygnus Scuba in Flat Rock N.C., have been coming down to Lake Keowee to help them clean the bottom. Divers from the Cliffs Vineyards Fire Department and the Keowee Fire Department have also joined in these efforts in the past. There were and still are a large number of aluminum cans and broken bottles concentrated in a few places where many boaters congregate.

Zeus "Ed" Stevens and Lewis assisted on Sept. 17 in shuttling the divers to the two areas they worked on — The Falls and the extension of Fall Creek Landing. Stevens spent some time with the divers over at The Falls and said that the dropping of the bottles and cans is a constant problem since that area was bottom swept at the end of last summer.

The bottom line is that that the primary purpose of the lake is to provide cooling capacity for ONC and the secondary purpose is to provide backup emergency hydroelectric power. Along with providing a clean source of drinking water for hundreds of thousands of Upstate residents, the lake provides abundant recreational opportunities for all to enjoy. The access area improvements in process will enhance access and recreational opportunities.

The hope is that those who are either careless or just plain do not care think about their behavior and start the next boating season bringing back at least what they brought out to the lake, and deposit the trash in the receptacles provided at all of the access areas.



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