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FOLKS wants Oconee, Pickens to be more proactive on lakes

Counties should monitor development more closely, Keowee group says

By Terry Cregar
STAFF WRITER
tcregar@greenvillenews.com

A local group that monitors development and water quality for Lake Keowee plans to push Pickens and Oconee counties to more closely monitor commercial development along the lake.

The effort comes as the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission reviews a final recreation management plan submitted last month by Duke Energy.

The plan would serve as a guide to managing current recreation resources on lakes Keowee and Jocassee until 2016, when Duke's current FERC license expires.

It outlines what the Friends of Lake Keowee Society calls a "robust" schedule for development of several recreational facility enhancements at lake public access areas in the two counties.

The two lakes serve as a border between Pickens and Oconee counties.

Duke Energy completed the plan following a yearlong collection of information in 2007 that looked at existing developed and undeveloped Duke access areas, state and municipal parks, and commercial recreation facilities within and adjacent to the two lakes.

FOLKS president Bill Graham said the group has general praise for the plan.

"At its core, it's a really good plan," Graham said. "It has been thoughtfully put together."

But the nonprofit group questions the federal agency's apparent dismissal of FOLKS' concern over continued commercialization of the public access areas on Lake Keowee. Work is under way on a marina at Warpath Landing on the Pickens County side that would include a restaurant, hotel and other amenties.

"The plan's desire for improvements to public access areas should be more passive than aggressive," Graham said.

He said most of the people who commented on the plan wanted moderate upgrades to the access points, such as courtesy docks and possibly fueling stations and bait shops.

Graham said FOLKS is working with Oconee County Council on a lakeside overlay district around Keowee that would limit development. He said the group hasn't formally approached Pickens County about an overlay district on that side of the lake.

"An overlay district is important in terms of how intense development could potentially be on the lake," he said.

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■ Duke Energy and Heron Cove Partners, the consulting firm hired by Duke to develop the lakes management plan, will present the plan at a public meeting at 6 p.m. today at Duke's World of Energy at the Oconee Nuclear Station.