Mapping a vision



CARLOS GALARZA | THE JOURNAL

Mountain Rest resident and activist Bud Lorsch holds an alternate redistricting map that would keep an area anchored by the Sumter National Forest and the Southern Blue Ridge Escarpment from being split up. The Oconee County Council is expected to discuss the proposed map at its next meeting Oct. 4.

Redistricting plan keeps rural area intact

BY CARLOS GALARZA
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WALHALLA — Oconee County has sent a citizen-initiated redistricting plan to state officials for review.

The plan is the work of Mountain Rest resident Susie Cornelius who has been leading an effort to convince Oconee County Council not to split up the area anchored by the Sumter National Forest that includes the Southern Blue Ridge Escarpment.

Cornelius and other residents put the alternate proposal together with the help of the county's GIS (Geographic Information Systems) Department over the past two weeks.

Council is expected to discuss the alternate plan at its Oct. 4 meeting.

Bud Lorsch, a Mountain Rest resident since 1982, said the map was completed last Thursday and sent to Columbia for review Friday. Lorsch credited Councilman Paul Corbeil and County Administrator Scott Moulder for giving the residents permission to use the county's map room and receive assistance from the GIS Department.

"They gave us full access to the map room," Lorsch said Monday.

Lorsch handed a copy of the proposed map to The Journal. He said a copy of the map is posted at the Mountain Rest Post Office.

The "Map 3" proposal carves Oconee's 2010 Census population of 74,273 as evenly as possible among its five council districts. District 1 is the largest geographic area in the map and stretches from the northeastern tip of Oconee, takes in all of the Sumter National Forest and the areas along the Chauga, Chattooga and Tugaloo rivers.

The way the map is redrawn it would appear as if Corbeil, who represents District 1, would be left out from where he lives on Lake Keowee.

Corbeil declined to comment on the map until officials with the state Budget and Control Board have reviewed it, and it is brought in for discussion.

"How it would impact incumbents is one of the questions that will come up," Corbeil said. "I have more questions, but the public is

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MAP: Mountain folks draft own plan

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best served by what the professionals say."

Lorsch said he has 47 signed petitions from residents that don't want the rural district split up.

"I guarantee you that by the time I get home there'll be more signed petitions in my mail box," he said.

He added that the community hopes to have more than 50 people at the next council meeting.

"I think the county will listen to us if we can get the people out," Lorsch said.

Council will hold a third and final public hearing Oct. 4 on the redistricting proposal recommended by the state in August. The plan would split rural areas from District 1 into District 2 and District 4.

Cornelius could not be reached for comment.

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