

Residents seek lake pledges from Duke



PATRICK COLLARD / Staff

Residents who spoke at a meeting on Duke's relicensing said they wanted the company to commit to some protections.

Development protections, compensation for loss of land access proposed for relicensing

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SENECA — Past and future enjoyment of Duke Energy lakes and lands weighed heavy on the minds of people who addressed the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission on Wednesday about the relicensing of hydroelectric facilities on lakes Jocassee and Keowee.

Residents in growing Lake Keowee subdivisions asked for protection from development of marinas and other commercial businesses on more crowded areas of the lake.

Others with deep Pickens and Oconee roots and memories asked for compensation for loss of public lands they thought would always be open for hunt-

ing, hiking and other outdoor pursuits.

"They made a lot of broken promises," former Pickens Mayor Ted Sheehan said.

Dana Leavitt, director of special projects for Upstate Forever, said documents from the original 50-year license promised between 60,000 acres and 74,000 acres of forest land would be available to the public.

"Duke has not fully satisfied the obligation," Leavitt said.

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DUKE

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Sandra Magee, a Duke spokeswoman, said Duke's "pledge has been more than fulfilled." Duke has protected "approximately 57,000 acres of land for public use in the Keowee-Toxaway area."

Leavitt said the public has use of about 40,000 acres "counting acres the state bought back" that are now Jocassee Gorges.

Land that Duke bought for \$83 an acre was sold to the

state for \$2,000 an acre, Sheehan said.

Duke didn't "pledge this land as a compromise or prerequisite to building our facilities but to honor our corporate commitment to partner with state and federal agencies," Magee said. The partnership "keeps these lands protected and maintained."

Northern Pickens County resident Dennis Chastain asked FERC to specify mitigation in the licensing for past loss of natural and historic resources including Fort Prince George, a 1700s outpost now under water.

Wayne Kelley of the Pickens County Historical Society proposed that Duke donate land, financing and an endowment for reconstruction of the historic fort as an educational tourism attraction.

Lake Keowee resident Jim Codner, president of Advocates for Quality Development, said commercial development should be planned and not plopped in the middle of residential areas and boat density should be restricted in constricted areas.

Issues including shoreline erosion and impact of pump

storage operations on fish were also raised.

FERC will accept written public comment through July 15. Duke's current license ends in 2016. Renewal would be for 30 to 50 years.

The final outcome and length of the license will be determined by FERC's five presidentially appointed commissioners.

Length typically is based on the cost of environmental and other measures including mitigation and development of added recreational facilities, said Elisabeth Blaug, FERC's attorney for the project.