



COLLIN CHAPPELLE / Staff

No uranium: James Amber works to cover the top of the new building that will house the system that will filter uranium from the well water at the Keowee Bay community near Salem.

Safer water for Keowee Bay

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One Lake Keowee community is looking forward to cleaner, safer drinking water as a uranium-removal system is installed later this month.

In late 2005, the two wells at Keowee Bay, which provides water for about 60 homes, tested too high for uranium, exceeding water standards set by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency.

After a year of research and study, the community next week will install a filtering system that will reduce the uranium in the water to nearly undetectable levels.

"When this system is running and installed, we'll have some of the best water that's available," said Al Eskridge, president of the property owners association.

Excessive uranium in drinking water can lead to an in-

HOW IT WORKS

■ Uranium is removed from the water through a two-tank filtration system. Ion-exchange resin in the tanks will grab uranium from the water and permanently bind to it. Once the resin, which resembles tiny plastic beads, has been exhausted, WRT will exchange the media (expected to be every three to four years at Keowee Bay) and transport the radioactive residuals to a licensed disposal facility.

creased risk of cancer and kidney toxicity, according to information from the EPA.

The homeowners association contracted with Water Remediation Technologies, a Colorado-based water-treatment company, to implement a water-filtering system.

According to Rick Zahnow, eastern regional manager for WRT, the uranium at Keowee Bay is naturally occurring, stemming from the erosion of

natural deposits in the soil.

"As long as the geology remains the same, uranium is going to be there," he said.

Zahnow said that after the uranium is removed from the water, it will be safely and legally disposed of.

"We not only take the uranium or radium out of the water, but we also take it out of the environment," he said.

In order to fund the filtering system — which cost \$100,500 plus \$3.60 per 1,000 gallons treated for operation and maintenance — Eskridge said the community's property owners were assessed a one-time maintenance-upgrade fee and will pay increased water costs.

A proposed alternative to water treatment was to tap into local city water, but Eskridge said the cost of running water lines and purchasing water from Salem would have been more than triple the cost of the filtering system.