Water: priceless!

Lake Keowee water source keeps on giving

CARLOS GALARZA
THE JOURNAL

SENECA — Local resident Anita Hudgins says she always sets a glass of water on her nightstand when she goes to bed at night.



Hudgins never loses any sleep worrying whether the water she pours from the dispenser on her refrigerator is safe to drink. Compared to other places she has lived, she rates Seneca's drinking water right up there with the best of them.

There are two things about Oconee's water supply from Lake Keowee that should allow most people not to worry about the priceless resource — it's ample and likely to be around for a long time.

For many, Lake Keowee is Duke Energy's gift to Oconee County that keeps on giving

Lakes Keowee and Jocassee were created as part of the Keowee-Toxaway Hydroelectric Project. Both reservoirs provide an ample supply of drinking water for the cities of Seneca and Greenville, recreational opportunities for the public, wildlife habitat, as well as cooling water for Oconee Nuclear Station. To boot, the electricity-generating infrastructure at the two facilities provides about 868 megawatts of power.

DeWitt Martin, long-time employee with the city of Seneca, said that before Lake Keowee was created the city's water source was Cane Creek.

It's been so long that Martin can't remember whether the water now tastes better than the water treated from Cane Creek.

"If you were thirsty that water tasted very good," Martin said.

The existing water treatment plant in Seneca was built in 1968 by Duke Energy to replace the old plant covered up by the development of Lake Keowee.

"If you go diving you could still see that old plant under water," Martin said.

In the 19 years that Steve Fletcher has been plant manager at Seneca's water treatment facility, he said state regulators have never issued a bad report on its

SEE WATER, PAGE A5



JESSICA NELMS | THE JOURNAL

Seneca Water Plant Manager Steve Fletcher explains the Dissolved Air Flotation treament process to a group of local visitors that recently toured the facility. Seneca's water plant underwent an $8 million upgrade a few years ago.

WATER: Both plentiful and pure

FROM PAGE A1

water quality.

Fletcher said water taken from Keowee and treated by Seneca makes its way to other areas of the county. He said the city is a wholesale provider to Pioneer Rural Water District and to Keowee Key.

Furthermore, although Walhalla and Westminster have their own water treatment plants with intake from other water sources, Fletcher said the three cities are interconnected for backup in case of emergencies.

"The way Lake Keowee is managed, we'll have an abundant supply for years to come," Fletcher said.

Ben Turetzky, executive director of the Friends of Lake Keowee Society, an organization formed in 1993 to preserve the benefits of Lake Keowee, said he thinks Lake Keowee's usefulness as a drinking water source will stand the test of time.

"I think the time is almost endless," Turetzky said.

Future growth around the lake with the addition of septic systems also is of concern to FOLKS, Turetzky said. He said more recent Crescent Resources communities have in their covenants annual inspections and maintenance of such systems.

"One of our goals is to have Crescent continue doing its good work with septic systems and get other homeowners' associations to impose it on themselves," Turetzky said.

As for Hudgins, she and her husband joined a group of other residents that recently toured Seneca's water plant. She came away from the tour more convinced than ever that the glass of water she sets on her nightstand is priceless.

carlos@dailyjm.com | (864) 973-6685



JESSICA NELMS | THE JOURNAL

Dale Hanna, a water and treatment operator at the Seneca water plant, runs a battery of chemical and bacteriological tests daily at the facility.