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# Keowee marina sailing ahead despite FOLKS

Lake group 'not pleased' about the way feds gave project green light

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Plans for a public marina complex on the Pickens side of Lake Keowee received federal approval despite concerns raised by a grassroots organization interested in protecting the environment around the lake.

The Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) approved the facility at Warpath Landing and denied the Friends of Lake Keowee Society (FOLKS) a second appeal for a rehearing.

The citizens group opposed the complex because they were concerned about the impact of the development on the quality of the water and the well-being of fish, birds and wildlife.

"We're still not pleased with the outcome," said FOLKS President Ben Turetzky. "It appears that the whole issue of Warpath Landing, as far as the FERC is concerned, is a finished issue."

But that doesn't mean FOLKS is finished with the issue, Turetzky said. The group is working with legislators to investigate how the FERC considers issues similar to Warpath Landing.

Sandra Magee, spokeswoman for Duke Energy, said the utility and the developer will work with FOLKS to address their questions and concerns.

"The developer's committed to making sure there are minimal disruptions to the natural habitat," she said. "There (are) commitments to relocate plant material to suitable areas and also to maintain an undisturbed buffer around the property. There's also expectations for stormwater and sewer systems to be consistent with the county, state and federal laws."

In an effort to lessen Warpath Landing's impact, developer Andy Ballard said



close attention will be paid to the buffer zones, stormwater and the wastewater treatment plant, concerns that have been raised by FOLKS.

Now that the development has secured federal approval, engineering and construction plans are moving forward. These more detailed layouts will then be subject to local approval, which allows for additional input and comment, Magee said.

Construction could begin within six to eight months, but it's too early to tell when the complex will be up and running, Ballard said.

The project will have public access, he said. There will be a marina, cabins, a beach area, campsites, RV parking, a hotel and conference center, and restaurants.

"That lake was built to be a public-access lake. It was not built to be a private lake just for the landowners," Ballard said. "And that's what we're trying to do, is make it more accessible to the people of Pickens County and the state of South Carolina."

In terms of economic development, the hope is that the facility will create 100 jobs in the summer and also draw tourists, as there is currently no hotel on Lake Keowee, Ballard said.

"It'll be a tremendous boost in tourism for Pickens County," he said.

Every phase of the project will have to be approved by the FERC, Duke Energy and Pickens County, according to Ballard.