

Duke Energy funds fish and wildlife habitat

THE JOURNAL STAFF

SENECA — Qualifying government agencies and nonprofit organizations are encouraged to submit applications for the Keowee-Toxaway Habitat Enhancement Program. The program funds projects that create, enhance and protect fish and wildlife habitats along the shores and in the watersheds of Lake Keowee and Lake Jocassee.

Projects eligible for funding include a wide range of categories — from planting native shoreline vegetation, constructing osprey platforms and wood duck boxes and installing fish attractors to purchasing property and conservation easements that permanently preserve rare and unique habitats.

Funds available for 2017 total \$1.3 million. Since 2015, the first year of implementation, the program has funded \$140,000 for projects supporting fish and avian habitat improvements. Individual project awards typically range from \$10,000-\$50,000.

The enhancement program was formed as a result of the Keowee-Toxaway Relicensing Agreement Duke Energy entered into with 16 other stakeholder organizations during

the Keowee-Toxaway Hydroelectric Project Federal Energy Regulatory Commission relicensing process.

The program is funded annually from a fee charged to individuals and developers seeking lake use permits for projects on the Keowee-Toxaway lakes, as well as by contributions from Duke Energy. The Foothills Community Foundation administers the funds.

Anyone interested in seeking funds this year is encouraged to complete an application found on the website at Keowee-Toxaway Habitat Enhancement Program and submit it for consideration by the July 31 deadline.

A panel composed of relicensing agreement representatives will review project proposals and make funding recommendations. Approved projects will receive the funds beginning in fall of 2017.

In addition to the Keowee-Toxaway program, a Catawba-Wateree Habitat Enhancement Program was established in 2007 for projects along the Catawba-Wateree River in North Carolina and South Carolina. Information for the program can be found at Catawba-Wateree Habitat Enhancement Program.