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# Something has to be done

## Chairman says county council will discuss Fall Creek drownings May 21

BY RILEY MORNINGSTAR  
 THE JOURNAL

SENECA — While last week's drowning of a 19-year-old Greenville County man marked the 18th death since 1993 at Fall Creek Landing on Lake Keowee, none of those victims were from Oconee County.

Oconee County Coroner Karl Addis said Angelo D. Hall, who died at Greenville Memorial Hospital hours after being pulled from the water at Fall Creek on April 29, was the seventh Greenville County resident to die at the landing since he took office in 1993. Six of the 18 victims in the last 26 years have been from Pickens County, while three were from Spar-



FILE

Signs warn visitors of the dangers of swimming at Fall Creek Landing, but officials say more steps are needed to prevent deaths after 18 drownings at the landing over the past 26 years.

tanburg County and two others were from Newberry County and Jackson

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'Our primary goal of government is to provide for public safety and health and welfare of our people.'

Wayne McCall  
 Oconee County councilman

### 26 years, 18 deaths

Fall Creek Landing deaths by county of residence since 1993

Home county	Deaths
Greenville	7
Pickens	6
Spartanburg	3
Newberry	1
Jackson (N.C.)	1
Oconee	0



# DROWNINGS: 'Shallow ridge gives people a false sense of security,' Duke official said

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County, N.C. The victims ranged in age from 15-67.

Oconee County Councilman Wayne McCall, who chairs council's Law Enforcement, Public Safety, Health and Welfare Committee, has expressed concerns about Fall Creek before. He said while "kids are going to be kids" and leap from the well-known "jumping off rock" at Fall Creek, something has to be done to make the area safer.

"These are kids, and we've just got to come up with something," he said. "There's something we can do, because the kids are our future. We have got to stress that and come up with a solution.

"We owe the local people to fix this," he added. "Our primary goal of government is to provide for public safety and health and welfare of our people. We need to come up with a way, because it's the nature of kids to jump off the rock and come up with their safety."

He added safety for visitors to the county should be the same as for Oconee County residents.

"A human life is a human life," McCall said. "If they're tourists, they'd be considered guests in our county, and we need to treat our guests the same as the citizens. People just want to come here and go swimming, and we owe it to all of our citizens."

McCall suggested putting a reflective cable or rope for visitors to hold on to while they move toward "jumping off rock."

"We've got to put a cable

or rope to go across so the kids have something to hold on to," he said.

"I would donate the damn rope, free of charge."

County council chairman Julian Davis said council is scheduled to discuss the issue at its meeting on May 21. He added Oconee residents "understand the dangers of water" in the county.

"They've grown up around it," Davis said. "From that standpoint, they also understand the risk of that. The difference in the height of the water seems to pose an issue. ... When the person comes back across, the water may be a foot and a half or two feet higher. There is also current in between there. Growing up here, a lot of us knew the current issue in between that peninsula point and the island as well."

He said improving

safety at Fall Creek is important.

"When people have gotten hurt on the Appalachian Trail, they haven't shut the Appalachian Trail down; they've made it safer," he said. "That's what we should be in charge of doing. We can't shut off nature, but we

**'When people have gotten hurt on the Appalachian Trail, they haven't shut the Appalachian Trail down; they've made it safer.'**

**Julian Davis**

Oconee County Council chairman

can make it safer to visit nature. Something has to be done. We can't stop drownings, but we can sure limit them from occurring."

Duke Energy owns the access area, and Davis said he's talked with Duke Energy government and community relations manager Emily DeRoberts about meeting to resolve the issue.

Davis said steps such as a possible land bridge or required life jacket zone would be a starting point, but he doesn't want to limit access to the public.

"We've talked about

putting out at the point where they walk across a life jacket area or talking about building a land bridge across there," he said. "People say that might encourage people to go across, but I don't agree, because people have continuously visited that area. We can't limit access to any part of the lake, nor should we. We should encourage safe access in and around the area."

Duke Energy communications manager Heather Danenhower said the company "agrees with local officials about the importance of safety to prevent drownings" and has employees and contractors inspect Duke property "on a weekly basis."

"We have multiple signs posted in this area warning people of the risks," Danenhower said. "The shallow ridge gives people a false sense of security. Though the water level on the ridge is relatively shallow, the water is much deeper on both sides of the ridge."

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