

Officials, residents meet to talk Keowee

BY NORM CANNADA
THE JOURNAL

SENECA — While about three dozen residents learned Lake Keowee's water quality is good, they also heard that projects are starting to make sure it stays that way.

Members of the Lake Keowee Source Water Pro-

tection Team met with the residents at the Seneca Water Plant on Thursday night to talk about the group's efforts to do just that by working with local people to put together a five-to-10-year plan and then seek funding to implement it.

Heather Nix, chair of the water protection team,

said funding for projects could come as soon as a year from now.

"The quality in Lake Keowee is good," Nix said. "Right now, we're looking at probably five or 10 years down the road and just figuring out what should be the top priorities that we need to look at now. ... We'll continue

to collect data, gather information, learn from the community and hopefully continue to refine that as we move forward."

The team's work to keep the quality of water in the lake high was one of the commitments Duke Energy made in the Keowee-Toxaway relicensing agreement signed by

water quality

Duke and 16 other parties in 2013. Duke donated a little more than \$1 million to the organization nearly two years ago to get the work started.

Nix said the meeting was designed to share what the team is doing and get input from the community about needs and concerns.

"There certainly was new information and new perspectives, but nothing that seemed completely out of the ordinary or unexpected," Nix said of the meeting.

Team members and residents talked about several issues during the hour-long

SEE KEOWEE, PAGE A6

KEOWEE: 'You are the eyes of the lake for us'

FROM PAGE A1

meeting, including the importance of forests to water quality, enforcement issues and dealing with bacteria and pollutants.

Officials emphasized that preventative measures are easier than treating problems afterward.

"One of the things that's of interest here is the drinking water source for a lot of people," Nix said. "We have seen some of the other lakes in the Upstate

that have had taste and odor problems. It's perfectly safe to drink that when that happens; it's just not as pleasing. We really want to maintain the great-tasting water that comes out of Keowee for all of our community. It's much easier to prevent any of those problems than to come back and fix them later."

Some residents were concerned about enforcement issues.

"Enforcement is always

a challenge, especially for agencies that tend to be run pretty lean," Nix said. "They don't have a tremendous amount of staff to be out keeping their eyes on everything."

Alan Stuart, Duke Energy's Federal Energy Regulatory Commission project licensing manager, said the agencies involved with the team need people living in the community to report issues.

"You are the eyes of the lake for us," he said.

Oconee County planning director and team member Adam Chapman said the discussion at the meeting was productive.

"Any time we can get the public involved, it's really good," he said. "We want to spend money proactively. There's a reason why Lake Keowee has such good water quality. There's a reason why other lakes have terrible quality. If we have something good, let's keep it good."