

Duke asks community to help keep lake areas clean

BY RILEY MORNINGSTAR
THE JOURNAL

SALEM — About 50 feet away from a trash can, a cardboard drink carrier sat on the ground of a Fall Creek Landing parking lot on Tuesday.

Just a day before, a cleanup worker contracted by Duke Energy was at the location sweeping up trash.

In one day, with increased summer visitation paired with the COVID-19 pandemic, trash was splayed throughout areas of the facility — in the grass, on the dock and in the parking lot.

“With a pandemic, we’ve seen even more people out here, going back as early as before the true summer season started, because people were home. There weren’t many other options — kids were out of school, and going on the lake was something you could do with ease,” Duke Energy spokesman Ryan Mosier told *The Journal*. “With that increased traffic comes the increase of trash and other types of things that you see when it comes from a maintenance perspective.”

Mosier said Duke Energy oversees and cleans 10 access areas on Lake Keowee three to four days a week. With many venturing out of their homes for the Fourth of July weekend, Mosier encouraged groups to pick up after themselves and protect the natural resource that is the lake.

“Treat the lake like it is yours.

Treat the access areas like they’re your home, your front yard,” he said. “If everybody does that, then the problem will go away. ... We just want everybody to be smart out here, have fun, be respectful of the facility and each other. Just help us out.”

Additional cleanup efforts are taking place today and Saturday for the holiday weekend.

“Even with an increased presence out here during the summer, we need the public’s help,” Mosier said. “We need people to be responsible for maintaining this great facility on this beautiful lake so the people that come after them aren’t stepping around in trash and have a pleasant experience, too, and a safe one. The attitude that goes in with leaving trash, that can impact safety.”

Mosier said Duke typically partners with the Friends of Lake Keowee Society for an annual lake sweep cleanup. With the ongoing pandemic, it’s just not possible, he said, stressing the importance of people picking up trash. Officials are hoping to squeeze in a cleanup date this year, but continue to monitor the unfolding pandemic.

ADJUSTMENTS WORKING

Last fall, Duke Energy installed a fence to deter visitors from visiting the peninsula that is home to Jumping Off Rock.

Additional signage has been placed, and rip-rap was installed to make it harder for boats to



RILEY MORNINGSTAR | THE JOURNAL

A worker picks up trash in a parking lot at Fall Creek Landing in Salem on Tuesday.

approach the area. The fence also extends into the water on both sides of the pathway. Approximately \$200,000 was spent on the improvements, according to Mosier.

The last drowning at the location was 366 days ago.

“So far, so good,” Mosier said of the changes. “This is very important to us, so we keep an eye on it. ... We hope that it sends a message to folks that this is not a good place to be. We’ll be keeping an eye on it.”

Fall Creek Landing in Salem is one of the first public access points on the northern end of Lake Keowee and has seen 20 drownings in 26 years. All the drowning victims since Oconee County Coroner Karl Addis began keeping records in 1993 have been male, and none were from Oconee. Of the 20 victims, 16 were between the ages of 16 and 27. The Oconee County Sheriff’s Office patrols the area on weekends and holidays.