



Funds for fish

FOLKS will install 100 Dock Pro fish attractors underneath private docks around Lake Keowee. The attractors hang by cable and will eventually collect algae to create feeding opportunities and spawning ground for fish.

FOLKS awarded grant to create habitat in Keowee

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SALEM — The land that would become the bed of Lake Keowee was cleared before it was flooded with water to cool the nuclear power plant.

That may have been great for the plant, but it wasn't so great for the fish.

Friends of Lake Keowee Society (FOLKS) has spent several years creating fish habitat around the lake, group president Dale Wilde said, and Duke Energy awarded two grants to the organization to install more fish habitats around the lake in November.

"There really isn't a good fish habitat down there," Wilde said. "Whatever is there for fish has been manually put back in. Some people throw Christmas trees in, (S.C. Department of Natural Resources) has tried various other fishing trials to see what would help with



PHOTOS SPECIAL TO THE JOURNAL

FOLKS volunteers and South Cove County Park staff assemble Moss-back SafeHaven XL fish habitats purchased with a previous grant. Duke Energy awarded FOLKS another grant to install 108 more habitats at county parks around Lake Keowee.

the habitat — they put in bamboo, they put in pallet structures and stuff like that.”

The grants will fund two separate habitat projects at county parks and private docks.

The first grant covers habitat structures for South Cove, High Falls and Mile Creek county parks and an area near the Stamp Creek pier, Wilde said.

“This year, we took a look at ‘All right, where is predominantly the most fishing going on that could also benefit people who don’t have boats?’” she said. “A lot of these areas are around the county parks, and they historically have not had fish habitat installed around them.”

The water around the parks will get two different structures.

Mossback SafeHaven XL structures look like

“three standing Christmas trees ... weighted down with 50 pounds of concrete,” Wilde said.

“We dump them off in six to nine lumps at a time, so it really creates this pile of habitat,” she said. “You really have to put multiple pieces down there to create a solid habitat for fish.”

FOLKS has used the structures before, but this time will also put down

“fish cities,” which Wilde said attract baitfish and spawning fish.

“They’re smaller, they’re more concise,” she said. “They’re set up in specific areas in a specific pattern so that it just lends itself toward promoting bait fish and breeding grounds, which we haven’t had before.”

‘This is a tremendous opportunity for people to enhance the fish habitat all over the lake.’

Dale Wilde
Friends of Lake Keowee Society president

PRIVATE DOCKS

The second grant will fund habitat kits placed underneath private docks.

“I put out a couple of social media posts and a

broad net to other associations to say ‘Who would be interested in receiving this Dock Pro Kit for free?’” Wilde said. “Within two weeks, I had almost 100 (people) sign up.”

She said FOLKS is looking for 10 more people to sign up so it can use the full grant.

“I have a grant that goes up to 100 kits, which is tremendous,” Wilde said. “This is a tremendous opportunity for people to enhance the fish habitat all over the lake.”

The Mossback Dock Pro Kits hang by cable out of sight underneath the dock, Wilde said, and attract fish without interfering with boating or swimming.

“There’s no habitat under people’s docks,” she said. “Fish will hang out there just for the shade,

but by having this fish habitat under there, it collects algae, which will provide food and nutrients for the fish, and it creates a spawning ground for bait fish.”

ENVIRONMENTAL CONCERNS

Wilde said FOLKS uses the Mossback habitats because they’re environmentally safe.

“They’re made of recycled plastic materials. They’re sturdy,” she said. “They’re not going to decompose over time. You put them in once and they’re going to be there pretty much forever.”

The nonprofit teams up with DNR to make sure projects are going in the right direction and then coordinates with Duke Energy to make sure nothing violates the Shoreline

Management Plan or any safety considerations.

“There’s a lot of collaboration up front to kind of gauge that the grant is going to be successful,” Wilde said.

FOLKS must apply for permits — a bulk permit for the park habitats, individual permits for the docks — before it can order the habitat kits.

Wilde said the habitats should be delivered and ready to put in Lake Keowee by early summer.

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