

Maintaining Lake Greenwood's 'diamond' status main topic of seminar



Staff photo by Vic MacDonald
 Hank McKeller, of the South Carolina Department of Natural Resources, uses a map of South Carolina with the state's watersheds highlighted to locate the Saluda-Reedy Watershed during a seminar Tuesday at Lake Greenwood State Recreation Area's Drummmond Center.
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Staff photo by Vic MacDonald

A crowd listens during The Saluda-Reedy Watershed Consortium's Watershed Leaders Forum 2, the second in a series of discussions of water issues in Upstate South Carolina.

broad recommendations by 2007 to the seven counties affected by the watershed. Its work is funded through major contributions by the V. Kann Rasmussen Foundation and Fuji Photofilm.

The Consortium announced the release of a publication, "From the Blue Wall to Lake Greenwood, the Saluda-Reedy Watershed is our home." It is the State of the Watershed Report 2005.

Putting copies of the report into the hands of 250 public officials in local governments within the lake's watershed is the consortium's next priority.

Laurens County Chamber of Commerce's King Dixon stressed the importance of protecting "the diamond in the rough."

"We have a jewel between us, Lake Greenwood," he said. "We're all concerned about the future of Lake Greenwood, and we know how precious this lake is to us."

By VIC MACDONALD
 Index-Journal regional editor

Protecting what one speaker called "the diamond in the rough" was agreed on as a top local priority by a consensus of about 150 people who gathered Tuesday at the Drummmond Center at Lake Greenwood State Recreation Area. How to effect that protection was the brainstorming topic for aquatic experts, local government and utilities officials and those who live by the water of Lake Greenwood. The Saluda-Reedy Watershed Consortium brought together the diverse discussion group for its Watershed Leaders

Forum 2, the second in a series of discussions of water issues of Upstate South Carolina.

What everybody agreed on was this: Lake Greenwood is a driving economic force for Greenwood and Laurens counties. Its shoreline also makes up the western border of Newberry County, but there was little discussion of the Newberry connection and no speakers from the county were included in the program.

But the major issues facing the lake, and whether any real progress can be made on the local government front to address the issues, were the subject of some times-spirited discussions. Some

residents of the northern lake said sediment is choking their enjoyment of the lake, especially when the lake level in the winter.

Some who spoke said Lake Greenwood's main challenges come from the north, from fast-developing Greenville County, where water flows downstream into the Saluda-Reedy Basin.

"The citizens of Greenwood County are very serious about protecting our lake," said Charles Schulze, of the Elliott Davis accounting firm, and a consultant for a foundation supporting the consortium's work.
 See LAKE, page 8A

LAKE

Continued from 1A

"Much of the lake's challenges are from actions upstream from Lake Greenwood. ... The future of Lake Greenwood depends mainly on our friends north of us," Schulze said.

But others said before Greenville County officials and developers will accept clamped-down regulations designed to keep contaminated groundwater from flowing downstream to Lake Greenwood, they will want assurance that officials in Greenwood and Laurens counties are doing everything they can to ensure water quality of the lake.

These local steps include enforcing state and local laws and zoning regulations designed to maintain trees and other ground cover that keeps mud, chemicals and trash from flowing into Lake Greenwood.

Hank McKeller, of the S.C. Department of Natural Resources, explained the system of water sampling stations set up on the Saluda and Reedy Rivers and Rabon Creek to monitor chemicals that can deplete oxygen in the water. The ultimate goal is to produce a first-ever computer model of water quality in Lake Greenwood, he said, and then compare that model to future data to gauge whether water quality is getting worse or better.

"The lake is getting better, not worse," said Bruce Lawrence, of development company Bruce Lawrence and Associates. "What we're doing now are all positive steps in the right direction."

The Saluda-Reedy Watershed Consortium is studying the current status of water quality and addressing other concerns in the 1,165 square miles of the lake's watershed with the aim of making