

The importance of Lake Greenwood to our county

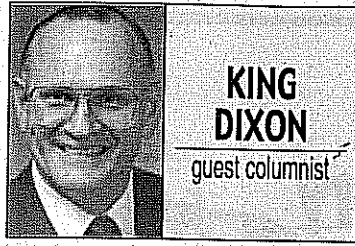
King Dixon delivered the text of the speech below at a Feb. 15 meeting at Drummond Center on Lake Greenwood to a crowd of citizens, government and business leaders concerned about the state of South Carolina's water quality and the future development of the lake.

We have received today a "call to action" and we need to do what we need to do for all the right reasons to preserve, protect, plan and work together for the good of what I consider to be our "diamond in the rough" – Lake Greenwood.

Water, a necessity of life. Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary defines water as "a major constituent of *all* living matter." We, and all living things, cannot do without it, and I highlight the word "all"!

Our state is truly blessed in its plenitude of rivers and lakes, to include Savannah Lakes, Lake Murray, Lake Keowee, Lake Jocassee, Lake Wateree, Lake Hartwell, Lake Wylie, Lake Marion, Lake Moultrie and, of course, Lake Rabon, and others. We in Laurens and Greenwood counties have a jewel lying between us – Lake Greenwood. As I see it, the question is what are we going to do to use, protect and enhance it? We came here today because we are all concerned about the future of Lake Greenwood – its water quality, future development, property values, recreational opportunities, environment, and its impact on the future of our counties. How precious this lake is to all of us.

As the chairman of the BODs of the Laurens County Chamber of Commerce, I was asked by Jason to address, from the Laurens Chamber's point of view, the importance of Lake Greenwood to Laurens County; and briefly, I will do my best by



highlighting five areas:

1. Quality of life. Lake Greenwood has a tremendous impact on the quality of life for Laurens County.

There are more than 1,000 residents of Laurens County who live on the eastern shores of the lake from Waterloo and Cross Hill to areas southward. New residents and homeowners are coming to the lake from all points in the county to enjoy the good life on the water. Some are full-time residents; others have recreational lake houses. County residents who own recreational houses come on weekends and late summer afternoons to enjoy boating, water skiing, wave running, fishing, barbecuing, horseshoes, swimming and sunbathing, among many other fun activities.

Retirees are a significant segment of the population who are drawn to the lake. South Carolina is one of the top five states that attracts retirees who have already made significant economic differences elsewhere and are looking to relocate to water property away from the big cities.

While Greenwood County is doing a great job of attracting retirees to its side of the water, Laurens County is not on the radar screen when it comes to retirement. Regrettably, Laurens County is not even listed with the Carolina Active Retirement Association (CARA) Web site. We need to do something about that! Economic development

agencies tell us that ten upper income retirees will have the same economic impact on a community as a small factory will. This is an area that I'm sure the Laurens County Chamber is planning to pursue!

2. Growth. Lake Greenwood has an impact on Laurens County's growth.

It's interesting to me that the two areas of Laurens County which grew the most between 1990 and 2000 were the northern portion, in close proximity to Greenville, and the area around Lake Greenwood. Further, in a recent workforce profile of the Upper Savannah area published by the South Carolina Employment Security Commission, I noted the projection that by 2015, Laurens County will lead the GLEAMNS area in population, increasing to 81,560, while Greenwood will be second at 73,680.

Obviously, Presbyterian College, Piedmont Tech, great health care, quaint downtown shops, our interstate highways and Lake Greenwood make our counties a wonderful place to live, rear our children, re-live history and enjoy tremendous recreational opportunities and the beauty of the great outdoors.

3. Property values and tax base. Let's talk a minute about property values and tax base. Despite limited infrastructure on the Laurens County side of Lake Greenwood, property on the lake is among the most valuable in Laurens County. My brother-in-law commented recently that these days, property on a teaspoon of water is valuable.

In recent years, Laurens County has experienced major upheavals in its tax base through plant closings, and it is important that the county maximize

and enhance those areas that have increased in value – areas like Lake Greenwood.

4. Economic development. Of course, Lake Greenwood affects economic development. In the economic development plan of Laurens County, we emphasize the proximity of Lake Greenwood as a good reason to locate in our county. As we know, proximity to a large body of water is a huge drawing card for an industry looking to locate where life is good.

With our four-lane Highway 72 from Lake Greenwood to the city of Clinton, Laurens County will have a large and largely untapped area for economic development. This can include commercial, residential and (with the right mix of infrastructure) industrial development.

5. Water and waste water services. I would hope that the development of adequate water and waste water services in this area between Lake Greenwood and Clinton, and even across the bridge to Laurens County, will be a priority of Laurens and Greenwood counties for the next 15 to 20 years! Lake Greenwood could provide a source of making Laurens and Greenwood counties a "little bit of heaven." We can do it if we work together! That is the challenge.

The Laurens County Chamber of Commerce looks forward to working with Greenwood County and upstream communities along the Saluda and Reedy rivers to ensure that both drinking water and recreation are as safe as possible, while preserving property values and the good life that Lake Greenwood residents on both sides of the lake currently enjoy.

I thank you for your attention, your interest, and for what you will do for the future of our communities.

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