

Too late to shed a river of tears when they drain our lake

If you live in Greenwood County, this is one public meeting you might want to attend.

In fact, if you drink water provided by Greenwood, flush a toilet into the sewer system, live on the lake, enjoy recreation on the lake, work in a business that uses the lake's water, have electricity — that covers a good bit — you really should attend.

Why? The meeting, among other things, will cover the lake's future. And the future doesn't look real great right now, unless the county abides by an unfunded federal mandate. Soon.

An arm of the federal government's alphabet soup, the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission, has told the county it has to spend

somewhere between \$15 million and \$30 million to keep us from drowning our neighbors in Saluda County in the event an earthquake rips apart the dam at Buzzard's Roost.

If the county does not act on FERC's demand (note: that's demand, not request), Robbie Templeton, Jim Kier and the rest of the gang on county council could end up behind bars.

OK, before you laugh and ask, "In that case, what's the problem?" you need to understand that Greenwood's wonderful lake would also cease to exist. Instead, it would resort to being a river winding its way down to Saluda. A narrow river.

You see, FERC isn't backing down on this. We — yes, we

A LETTER TO OUR READERS



RICHARD S. WHITING
Executive News Editor

— have to foot the bill to shore up the dam.

Now you're thinking, "Hey, riverfront property might be real nice! Tell FERC to ..."

A word or two of caution about giving up the lake and letting a river run through it:

- The river wouldn't provide

nearly the drinking water we currently enjoy. Buy it elsewhere? Maybe. But consider the possible price tag.

- Not all the current lakefront property would become riverfront property. So? So it winds up having a lower property value.

- It was the lake, not a river, that treated much of our industrial base, which is dependent on an abundant water supply.

Starting to see the big picture? String the clichés together. Our backs are up against the wall. FERC is holding a gun to our heads. The feds have us in a tight spot.

Yep. All true. But we have to deal with it. It's our lake, and our lake is our source of drinking water, water to supply industrial

STATE OF THE COUNTY MEETING

- When: 6:30 p.m. Tuesday, May 23
- Where: Arts Center (old Federal Building)
- Who should attend: Greenwood County residents

needs (present and future), tax revenue, recreation and more. It's our lake, it's our dam problem.

And so again, attend the meeting on the 23rd. Funding the dam project is among the topics. County council, in its infinite wisdom, could simply hike the property taxes and let only Greenwood County residents enjoy footing the bill. While that might keep them out of jail, it wouldn't keep

them in great favor with a number of voters! Another option that will be discussed is a referendum to raise the sales tax by a penny and then rolling that penny tax back once the dam work is paid for. The greatest appeal this has is that at least Greenwood County residents would have help from neighboring counties and tourists in paying the bill. And the latest estimate is that 40 percent of sales tax generated in Greenwood County is coming from the wallets of non-residents.

Also up for discussion: funding for the county's proposed new library and discussion of county workforce issues.

Richard S. Whiting can be reached at rwhiting@indexjournal.com or 943-2522.