



# GHS boys tennis heading to state finals

Sports 1B



# Index-Journal

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SERVING OUR COMMUNITY SINCE 1919

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DAILY \$2

## Tensions flare over lake issues

### Environmental concerns spill into Greenwood County rezoning debate



RENEE ORTIZ | INDEX-JOURNAL

Aaron Kahn speaks during the public comment portion of Tuesday's Greenwood County Council meeting after signing up under a rezoning ordinance involving Chandler Construction Services. Kahn later clarified to the Index-Journal his comments were intended to address broader industrial rezoning concerns and not accuse Chandler Construction of contamination or wrongdoing.

By Renee Ortiz  
rortiz@indexjournal.com

Greenwood County Council approved multiple rezoning and economic development items Tuesday, though discussion briefly turned tense after public comments tied broader environmental concerns and ongoing discussion surrounding Lake Greenwood to industrial development debates in the county.

Council member Robbie Templeton was not in attendance.

#### Public comment raises environmental concerns

During the public comment portion of Tuesday's meeting, Aaron Kahn raised concerns about indus-

trial contamination and environmental oversight while signed up to speak under Ordinance 2026-16, a third-reading rezoning request and public hearing involving Chandler Construction Services.

The ordinance involved two parcels totaling about 15.68 acres at 1511 Ninety Six Highway proposed to be rezoned from agricultural to light industrial zoning.

Kahn began by criticizing county leadership and raising concerns about potential industrial contamination, environmental oversight and ongoing public discussion surrounding the former Ascend property and Lake Greenwood.

See **TENSIONS**, page 8A

## Hope Rivers honored for 30 years of opening paths

By Mya Atten  
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Hope Rivers never set out to chase milestones.

Three decades later, she has reached more than a few — not by design, but by following opportunity wherever it led.

Born and raised in Whitmire, Rivers is a first-generation college student and a three-time alumna of the University of South Carolina. She earned a doctorate in educational administration, a certificate in higher education leadership, a



MYA ATTEN | INDEX-JOURNAL

Three decades into her career with the South Carolina technical college system, Hope Rivers says her passion for serving students remains as strong as ever.

associate and executive vice president. Before becoming the third president of Piedmont Technical College, she served as executive vice president of the South Carolina Technical College System.

In January 2021, she became the first woman and first person of color to lead Piedmont Tech.

When Rivers first entered the technical college system, its role was still taking shape. She said there was a growing sense of momentum, but also important conversations about how technical colleges could best serve students through workforce training, university transfer opportunities and community impact.

See **RIVERS**, page 4A

## 'Insatiable desire'



MYA ATTEN | INDEX-JOURNAL

Graduates walk through the arch as faculty and staff celebrate commencement at Lander University.



Chief Justice John W. Kittredge delivers the commencement address during graduation ceremonies at Lander University.

## Lander commencement celebrates 621 new alumni

By Mya Atten  
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After years of classes, clinicals, late nights and exams, 621 Lander University students crossed the stage Wednesday during the university's 173rd commencement.

The ceremony at Finis Horne Arena honored recipients of bachelor's and master's degrees across multiple disciplines.

The 10 a.m. ceremony recognized graduates from the College of Business and Technology and the College of Nursing, Human Performance and Health Sciences. A 2 p.m. ceremony honored graduates from the College of Education, the

College of Humanities, Arts and Social Sciences, and the College of Science and Mathematics.

South Carolina Chief Justice John W. Kittredge delivered the commencement address at both ceremonies, sharing personal reflections and practical advice with graduates.

"Remember, we're all human. We all make mistakes," Kittredge said. "The key point is to learn from our mistakes and not repeat them."

He encouraged graduates to show up on time, listen carefully to others and pursue work that gives them purpose.

"You'll find that many people

See **LANDER**, page 7A

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## LAKELANDS WEATHER

Today	Saturday	Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday
					
<b>Sunny</b> High: 73 Low: 54 Chance of precipitation: 0%	<b>Partly sunny</b> High: 78 Low: 59 Chance of precipitation: 20%	<b>Partly sunny</b> High: 80 Low: 60 Chance of precipitation: 50%	<b>Partly sunny</b> High: 77 Low: 49 Chance of precipitation: 40%	<b>Sunny</b> High: 74 Low: 52 Chance of precipitation: 0%	<b>Sunny</b> High: 80 Low: 55 Chance of precipitation: 0%
<b>Lake levels (in feet)</b>					
Clarks Hill: <b>322.36</b> +/- full pool: <b>-7.64</b>	Hartwell: <b>652.84</b> +/- full pool: <b>-7.16</b>	Marion: <b>575.02</b> +/- full pool: <b>-1.78</b>	Russell: <b>474.76</b> +/- full pool: <b>-0.24</b>	Greenwood: <b>438.87</b> +/- full pool: <b>-1.13</b>	Keowee: <b>96.64</b> +/- full pool: <b>-3.36</b>
		Murray: <b>355.46</b> +/- full pool: <b>-4.54</b>	Wateree: <b>95.90</b> +/- full pool: <b>n/a</b>		

# Public comment exchange at highlights balancing act

By Renee Ortiz  
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A public exchange during Tuesday's Greenwood County Council meeting is drawing attention to how South Carolina local governments regulate public comment periods while balancing First Amendment protections and maintaining order during meetings.

### County council public comment

The discussion arose after a resident used the public comment portion of the meeting to raise broader environmental concerns tied to industrial rezonings and ongoing public discussion surrounding the former Ascend property and Lake Greenwood.

Resident Aaron Kahn signed up to speak under Ordinance 2026-16, a third-reading rezoning request involving Chandler Construction Services, though he later clarified his claims and comments were not directed at the Chandler property itself.

"It was the only way to speak about the issues that matter to the people in front of council. To get the people's voices heard," Kahn said in a Facebook message to the Index-Journal following the meeting.

During the exchange, there was confusion among council. Council Chairman Theo Lane questioned whether Kahn's comments regarding alleged contamination exposure were related to the Chandler Construction property listed on the public comment sign-in sheet.

Kahn later clarified to council, and after the meeting to the Index-Journal, that his comments were intended to argue county leaders should pause industrial rezonings until additional environmental concerns are publicly addressed.



SCREENSHOT

Aaron Kahn speaks during public comment at the Greenwood County Council meeting Tuesday at the Greenwood County Library. Kahn signed up to speak under Ordinance 2026-16, a rezoning request involving Chandler Construction Services, but later clarified his comments regarding potential environmental concerns were tied to the former Ascend property and Lake Greenwood rather than the Chandler site.

### State guidance on public comment

According to guidance published by the Municipal Association of South Carolina (MASC), councils are not generally required to offer public comment sessions and have broad authority to establish rules governing decorum, time limits and relevance during meetings.

However, unlike general public comment, public hearings tied to rezonings, budgets and certain fees are specifically required under South Carolina law.

Public comment periods should not interfere with the business functions of council meetings, MASC states in guidance published for municipalities.

Councils are to adopt clear procedures covering when residents may speak, how long they may speak and whether comments must relate to agenda items.

Depending on the rules set, procedures can vary from municipality to

municipality depending on the rules adopted by council.

The South Carolina Attorney General's Office (AG) released two opinions in 2023 and 2025 regarding public comment. Both opinions similarly concluded local governments may impose "reasonable" and content-neutral restrictions during public comment sessions, including time limits and relevance requirements.

One opinion noted councils may stop comments if speech becomes "irrelevant or repetitious," but cautioned restrictions cannot be based on disagreement with a speaker's viewpoint.

"Actual disruption means actual disruption," the opinion states. "It does not mean constructive disruption, technical disruption, virtual disruption ... or imaginary disruption."

Another section states that while councils may enforce rules and maintain order, "such power should be exercised with great caution

to prevent abuse and a potential infringement of one's First Amendment rights."

The AG opinions further note the South Carolina Freedom of Information Act does not establish "a per se right to speak at a public meeting."

But the opinion cautions this should not be read to deny interested parties an opportunity to be heard at legally required public hearings.

### What Greenwood County's rules say

Greenwood County's own council procedures include specific rules governing how residents may participate during public comment periods at regular council meetings.

Under the county's published rules of procedure, residents wishing to speak during public comment must sign a speaker list maintained by the clerk to council before the start of the public comment period and identify the specific agenda item they intend to address.

The county's policy further states that "no speaker will be allowed to speak to multiple agenda items" during the public comment portion of the meeting.

County rules also allow the chairman or presiding officer to limit the length of presentations and the number of speakers during public comment.

Another section of the county's policy states that "no matter shall be entered on the agenda or heard by the council unless it is within the council's authority or jurisdiction."

The county's procedures additionally distinguish public comment from presentations formally scheduled before council meetings.

Under the policy, requests for formal presentations generally must be submitted to the clerk to

council by noon on the Thursday before the next regular Tuesday meeting.

### Journalism ethics and public participation

The exchange also raised broader questions about journalists and independent media figures participating in meetings they may also publicly cover or comment on afterward.

The Society of Professional Journalists' Code of Ethics encourages journalists to "act independently" and avoid "conflicts of interest, real or perceived."

The SPJ code is not legally enforceable but is widely referenced as an ethical guideline within the journalism profession.

The code also states journalists should "be vigilant and courageous about holding those with power accountable" while supporting "the open and civil exchange of views."

### Council addresses confusion during closing comments

Following confusion during the public comment exchange, several council members later addressed broader public concerns tied to development discussions, misinformation and ongoing environmental questions.

Vice Chairman Dayne Pruitt said council members have limited authority outside official meetings and noted the misunderstandings about councils' role in development applications and planning commission matters.

Lane later emphasized the county's intent to respond factually to public concerns as discussions surrounding development and environmental oversight continue.

"There's been a lot of consternation and a lot of accusation and a lot of false information," Lane said. "I can promise you that whether it comes from members of this body or whether it comes from our staff, when we respond to issues in this community, we will respond factually."

## TENSIONS

From page 1A

"Deferring discussion does not eliminate risk and it does not answer questions," Kahn told council. "The question is no longer just whether this land can be rezoned. The question is whether it should be rezoned before the public fully understands what may be there?"

Kahn referenced alleged physical symptoms he said he experienced near the former Ascend property, including lightheadedness, tingling sensations and a nosebleed.

Kahn concluded by urging council to pause rezonings until his pending Freedom of Information Act requests are released publicly.

"Make decisions based on complete information, not assumptions, because there are 1.5 million people watching you through my eyes," Kahn warned.

Council Chairman Theo Lane then questioned whether Kahn's comments were related to the Chandler Construction property tied to Ordinance 2026-16, the item Kahn signed up to speak on during public comment.

"When you were talking about your arms tingling, you're not talking about this piece of property [Chandler Construction]?" Lane asked.

Kahn later clarified during the exchange that the alleged exposure incident he referenced occurred near the former Ascend property and not near the Chandler site.

"It's not the same property. I'm just using that as an example," Kahn said.

Following the meeting, Kahn told the Index-Journal his comments were not intended to accuse Chandler Construction Services of contamination or wrongdoing, but were instead meant to argue the county should pause rezonings.

"It wasn't a personal attack at all for Chandler. It was for the sole purpose of telling people they need to halt rezoning stuff until they can answer some basic questions in regards to what everyone wants to know," Kahn wrote in a Facebook message.

### Chandler rezoning approved

Council later entered into public hearing for Ordinance 2026-16, the rezoning request involving two parcels totaling about 15.68 acres at 1511 Ninety Six Highway from agricultural to light industrial zoning.

Rob Russian, deputy county manager for operations, told council Chandler Construction Services has operated at the site since the early 1970s and sought the rezoning to align the property's zoning classification with its existing industrial use and planned expansion.

Patrick Hobson, president of Chandler Construction Services, also spoke during the hearing and strongly objected to comparisons between Chandler's property and environmental concerns made by Kahn.

"We do things the right way, and to compare Chandler Construction Services to a chemical production facility that's been there for a long time is an irresponsible way of using your public

opinion," Hobson said addressing Kahn. "I don't think you should try to make our council members into feeling shameful for doing things that are best for our community."

Council unanimously approved the rezoning request following the public hearing.

The Index-Journal spoke briefly with Hobson after the vote and public comment.

"I wasn't planning on speaking, but he [Kahn] provided way too much misinformation," Hobson said.

### Project Piranha moves forward

Council also approved the second reading of an infrastructure credit agreement tied to Project Piranha, identified by county officials as an Amazon last-mile delivery facility planned for the Ninety Six Business Park.

Economic Development Director James Bateman said the approximately \$20 million project is expected to bring roughly 185 jobs to the area.

Under the agreement, Amazon would cover the cost of on-site sewer improvements while asking the county to reimburse costs associated with extending off-site sewer infrastructure that could also serve future tenants within the business park.

### In other business

Council also approved several infrastructure, procurement and redevelopment measures Tuesday, including road equipment purchases, a county-wide road safety plan, and preliminary historic preservation incentives for a

downtown Greenwood redevelopment project.

- Council voted unanimously to:
  - dissolve the Spring Lake special tax district
  - approve a procurement variance for county employee apparel purchases
  - approve a motor grader purchase for the road department for \$287,960.
  - adopt the county's Comprehensive Road Safety Action Plan

Council also approved preliminary Bailey Bill certification for renovations planned at 200 Main St. North, a historic building near the Veterans Center in Uptown. Under the Bailey Bill, state law allows county and municipal governments to offer special property tax assessments for rehabilitated historic property and low- and moderate-income rental property.

Steve Riley, with R2 Investments, said the project will include a barbecue training and event space intended to attract national barbecue organizations and television personalities to Greenwood.

### Council addresses misinformation concerns

Several council members referenced ongoing frustration surrounding misinformation, confusion about process and public concern tied to Lake Greenwood and industrial development discussions during closing council comments.

District 2 Councilman Mark Allison said state officials and county staff continue working with agencies regarding issues involving Lake Greenwood.

"There's so many rumors out there that are not true," Allison said. "My concern with it is it takes the focus off of what we need to be looking at."

Vice Chairman Dayne Pruitt also referenced recent public frustration surrounding planning and development meetings and council's limited role in the process.

"We also have to understand what the rules are. County council members absolutely have zero authority outside of a called meeting," Pruitt said, referencing the joint planning commission meeting he and council member Cathy Miller sat in on last week.

District 3 Councilwoman Johanna Bishop referenced public criticism directed toward council and county staff.

"A lot of things were said and done, just like the gentleman that was here tonight, that was not right," Bishop said. She later went on to encourage residents to continue reaching out to council members and highlighted the efforts of the county.

Lane closed the meeting by addressing ongoing public tension surrounding recent environmental discussions.

"There's been a lot of consternation and a lot of accusation and a lot of false information," Lane said. "I can promise you that whether it comes from members of this body or whether it comes from our staff, when we respond to issues in this community, we will respond factually."

The next meeting will take place at 5:30 p.m., on May 19, at the Greenwood County Library.



Index Journal  
**SALUTE**  
TO NURSES

# Inside today's edition!

Pages 1C-8C

# Index Journal

INDEXJOURNAL.COM

SERVING OUR COMMUNITY SINCE 1919

VOL. 108, NO. 53

4 SECTIONS, 28 PAGES

SUNDAY, MAY 10, 2026

DAILY \$2

**DEVELOPMENT**

## Officials: County regulates, not pushes

By Renee Ortiz  
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As housing proposals continue to surface across Greenwood County, officials say public concern often centers on what the county controls, what developers pay for and how much growth local systems can handle.

**Regulating the process**

The county does not recruit housing developments, said Rob Russian, Greenwood County deputy county manager of operations. Instead, residential projects generally begin with private landowners, developers or investment groups seeking to develop land they own or are trying to purchase.

"We regulate the process," Russian said. "We don't push it along."

That distinction has become increasingly important as residents raise questions about infrastructure, traffic, schools and Lake Greenwood. Several recent and proposed projects have sparked public concern, including developments near Ninety Six and the lake.

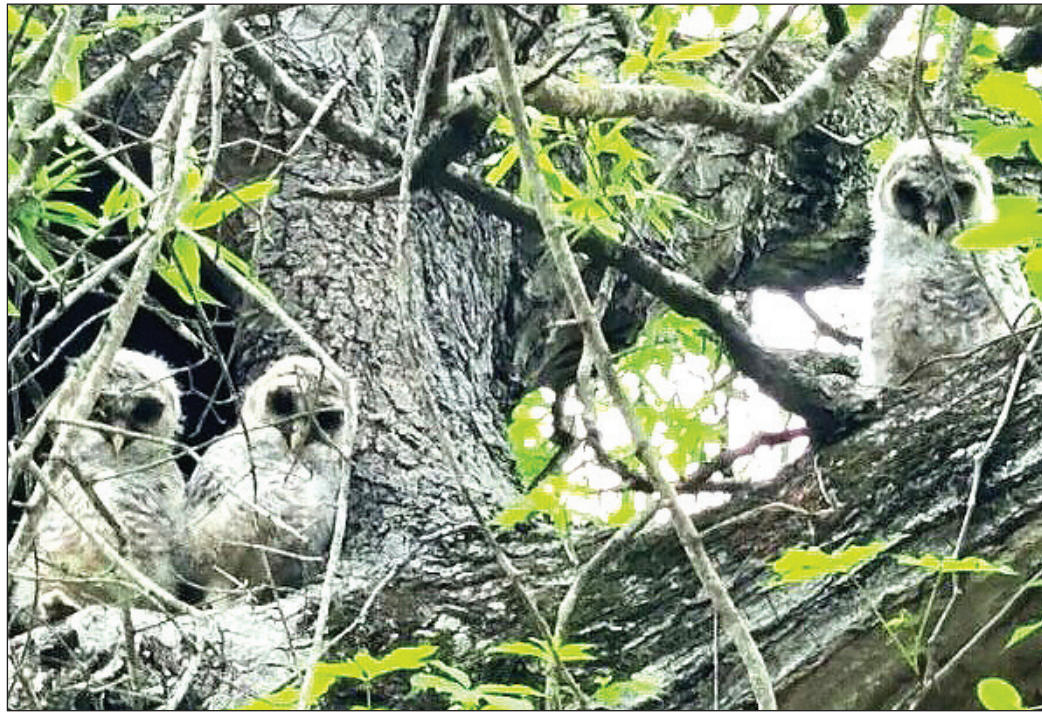
Russian said the county's role depends largely on whether a proposed project fits the current zoning classification. If a plan meets those requirements, it does not have to go before the Planning Commission or County Council for rezoning. In those cases, the developer may move forward "by right," provided the project meets county ordinances and development standards.

If a rezoning is required, the proposal goes through a public review process, including Planning Commission consideration and, ultimately, County Council action.

"Most of it is private land that's being developed by a private company or citizen," Russian said. "As long as it meets the guidelines of what that property is zoned for, they're free to develop that property as they see fit."

However, developments do not move forward without oversight. Russian said subdivision projects must still meet county requirements for roads, drainage, utilities and access. The county inspects new roads during construction

See **REGULATES**, page 7A



SUBMITTED PHOTOS

Three owlets look around from their nest along Kirksey Pittsburgh Road in Greenwood.

## Ladies and gentlemen ...

# The Hoo!

## Road work turns into a real hoot

By Renee Ortiz  
rortiz@indexjournal.com

A Greenwood County road project turned into a rescue mission after a baby owl fell from a tree along Kirksey Pittsburgh Road.

Dave Roberts, Greenwood County Road Department superintendent, said he and a county

crew were working on a drainage issue near a driveway when the owl fell from its nest and landed near him.

"He wasn't two feet from me when he hit the ground," Roberts said. "I thought, 'Oh my God, this poor little guy.'"

See **HOOT**, page 6A



**ABOVE:** A young barred owl sits on a towel after falling from a tree along Kirksey Pittsburgh Road. Michelle Gordy contacted PAWS Animal Wildlife Sanctuary, which advised that the owl should be returned to its nest if possible. **RIGHT:** Greg Gordy holds a young barred owl wrapped in a towel after it fell from a tree on his family's property.



## Vickery leaves lasting legacy in Ninety Six

By Mya Atten  
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Inside the band room at Ninety Six High School, Aiken native David Vickery built far more than championship caliber performances.

Over nearly three decades, he

built a culture, a tradition and, for many students, a second home.

Now, after 29 years in education, Vickery is preparing to step away from the podium that shaped generations of students and helped define one of South Carolina's most respected high

school band programs.

Under Vickery's leadership, the Ninety Six Wildcats Marching Band won 12 South Carolina Class A championships, earned multiple superior ratings in

See **LEGACY**, page 4A



After 29 years of leading the Ninety Six Wildcats Marching Band to statewide success, David Vickery is retiring as band director.

SUBMITTED

## Fish kill bigger than thought

By Renee Ortiz  
rortiz@indexjournal.com

State records obtained by the Index-Journal show South Carolina environmental and wildlife agencies spent weeks investigating reports of fish deaths, environmental concerns and possible buried industrial drums tied to areas near the former Monsanto/Ascend property along Lake Greenwood.

**Initial fish kill numbers increase**

The records outline a coordinated investigation by South Carolina environmental and wildlife agencies into what officials described as an "aquatic mortality event." The event affected fish, turtles and snails across portions of Lake Greenwood beginning in April.

The records, compiled by the South Carolina Department of Natural Resources and South Carolina Department of Environmental Services, detail investigative activity between April 21 and May 4.

Initial public estimates surrounding the fish kill in April were previously reported at about 3,000 dead fish.

However, following a May 6 briefing involving state legislators and Greenwood County officials, investigators now estimate between 15,000 and 25,000 aquatic animals may have been affected during the event.

State staff documented thousands of dead fish during the investigation. Records included

See **KILL**, page 5A



SUBMITTED

Dead fish are seen along the shoreline of Lake Greenwood during the April 2026 aquatic mortality event.

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**Happy Mother's Day**  
"A mother's love endures through all."  
-Washington Irving



## UNWIND CALENDAR

Listings subject to change. Contact host organizations for most up-to-date information.

- Now, through May 30, "Federal Building" an exhibit at the Arts Center of Greenwood. Visit: artscenter-greenwood.com.
- Now, through May 30, "This Land: America250" an exhibit at the Arts Center of Greenwood. Visit: artscenter-greenwood.com.
- Friday, 7:30 p.m., Newberry Opera House hosts Lonesome River Band, led by 5-time IBMA Banjo Player of the Year, Sammy Shelor. Get information and tickets by calling 803-276-6264 or visiting: NewberryOperaHouse.com.
- Saturday, Art+Ag Tour with Clem-

son Cooperative Extension, in Abbeville County 10 a.m. — 5 p.m. Free, self-guided farm tour, the largest in the nation, with local artisans at every stop. Visit: agandarttour.com.

- Saturday, Family Fun Day at the Railroad Historical Center in Greenwood, 908 Main St. South. Visit: greenwoodmuseum.org.
- May 17, 3 p.m., Swingin' Medallions, at Newberry Opera House, 1201 McKibben St., Newberry. Box Office hours: 9 a.m.- 5:30 p.m. Tuesday-Friday and 10 a.m.- 2 p.m. Saturday. Call 803-276-6264 or visit: newberryoperahouse.com.
- May 21, 7:30 p.m., Paul Thorn, at Newberry Opera House, 1201 McKibben St., Newberry. Box Office hours:

9 a.m.- 5:30 p.m. Tuesday-Friday and 10 a.m.- 2 p.m. Saturday. Call 803-276-6264 or visit: newberryoperahouse.com.

- May 22, 5-7 p.m., reception for "This Land: America250" an exhibit at the Arts Center of Greenwood. Free admission. Visit: artscenter-greenwood.com.
- May 22, 5-7 p.m., reception for "Federal Building" an exhibit at the Arts Center of Greenwood. Free admission. Visit: artscenter-greenwood.com.
- May 28-June 6, Juried Youth Art Show for the South Carolina Festival of Flowers, at the Arts Center of Greenwood. Visit: artscenter-greenwood.com.

- May 30, International Food Truck Fest, hosted by Starlite Events, is at the Uptown Market in Greenwood, 220 Maxwell Ave. Vote for your favorite international food truck, \$1 per vote. Places for 1st, 2nd, 3rd to be awarded along with one beverage winner. This family-friendly event will have music, arts and craft vendors, giveaways and more. Email for info: starlite-eventsllc@gmail.com.
- June 4-July 25, South Carolina Festival of Flowers Juried Art Show at the Arts Center of Greenwood. Visit: artscentergreenwood.com.
- June 4, 5-6:30 p.m. reception/awards ceremony for the South Carolina Festival of Flowers Juried

Youth Art Show, at the Arts Center of Greenwood. Free admission.

- June 4, 11 a.m./2 p.m., "Lilo & Stitch" at Newberry Opera House, 1201 McKibben St., Newberry. Box Office hours: 9 a.m.- 5:30 p.m. Tuesday-Friday and 10 a.m.- 2 p.m. Saturday. Call 803-276-6264 or visit: newberryoperahouse.com.
- June 4, 7-9 p.m., at Uptown Market, Greenwood Performing Arts invites you to "Beach Music Blast with the Swingin' Medallions" 220 Maxwell Ave. Get tickets online at: greenwoodperformingarts.org or in-person at the GPA office at 120 Main St. in the Arts Center of Greenwood. Call 864-554-0236.

## KILL

From page 1A

tallies of about 1,750 fish in one surveyed area on April 16 and another 1,650 fish observed the following day in a separate portion of the lake.

Records also referenced deceased snails, reports of dead mussels and the later collection of a dead black vulture for testing connected to the investigation.

### Investigation timeline

During an interview Thursday night with the Index-Journal, state Rep. John McCravy said lawmakers and Greenwood County officials met directly Wednesday with SCDNR and SCDES leadership in Columbia to review the investigation and ask questions about the event.

McCravy said state officials told attendees they believe investigators have ruled out several common causes typically associated with large fish kills.

"They rule out oxygen depletion, they rule out a pathogen," McCravy said. "They feel like they've ruled out big things that normally they would look at."

McCravy said state officials told lawmakers that water column testing and oxygen testing had not revealed abnormal conditions in the lake.

"They have not found anything out of the ordinary," McCravy said. "They tested the columns of water for oxygen as well, not just for safety, but they also tested the column for oxygen, and it was all normal."

According to the records, investigators initially responded April 13 after reports of dead fish near Morse Landing.

Over the following days, records show the fish kill expanded across portions of the lake stretching from the Cane Creek area toward Buzzard's Roost near Lake Greenwood State Park.

A summary included in the records described the event as a "likely non-biological (water quality or chemical) cause."

The report's conclusion section later stated the incident appeared "consistent with a pollutant or other contaminant being introduced into the lake," though investi-

gators said a definitive cause had not been confirmed.

On April 21, records show SCDES staff collected fish for heavy metals testing. Investigators also received reports regarding possible chemical sources connected to the former Monsanto/Ascend property.

Records also show allegations involving industrial barrels and possible burial sites emerged as additional leads during the broader fish kill investigation. The reports prompted follow-up interviews, site visits and environmental testing by state agencies.

The following day, investigators documented reports of dead mussels and dead snails in a cove below a trestle near the lake.

Records also show investigators inspected a blue plastic barrel containing an unknown slush-like substance. Testing later indicated no toxins were identified in the barrel contents, according to the report.

Despite those findings, the investigation continued expanding over the following days.

On April 23, SCDNR Law Enforcement formally opened a case and conducted follow-up witness interviews regarding alleged burial sites connected to the property.

By April 24, state staff were collecting water and soil samples from Lake Greenwood while continuing additional interviews connected to possible burial locations.

A timeline included in the records states investigators interviewed a former plant worker on April 27. The worker alleged chemical waste had historically been improperly disposed of in 55-gallon industrial drums on the property.

On April 29, investigators documented observations of industrial drums near the edge of the lake. Records state the drums were visible about 10 feet from the shoreline and about 30 yards from navigable waters.

Additional investigative activity continued April 30. Records show SCDNR Law Enforcement transported SCDES staff to the drum locations and coordinated additional meetings involving GPS coordinates and witness information regarding alleged burial areas.

On May 1, SCDES staff conducted field work using ground-penetrating radar in an attempt to identify potential burial sites associated with the industrial drum allegations.

McCravy said state officials told lawmakers they also investigated allegations

involving buried barrels on property adjacent to the former industrial site.

"They investigated around the old Monsanto area, and they investigated property adjacent to it that people had complained about or reported might contain buried barrels," McCravy said.

McCravy said officials told lawmakers they had not identified evidence showing contaminants from those areas entered the lake.

"They can't find anything that ran off or came through a creek that went into the water," McCravy said.

### What about the water?

McCravy also said state officials told lawmakers they believed drinking water remained safe. He said SCDES may reevaluate an initial advisory recommending residents avoid swimming near areas containing dead fish.

According to McCravy, officials said the advisory was issued largely because of concerns surrounding decomposing fish rather than confirmed toxic contamination in the water itself.

In a follow-up message to the Index-Journal on Thursday, McCravy said state officials indicated that the fish and water may pose no danger to the public.

"From SCDES: Based on current water quality indicators there is no evidence that indicates swimming or fishing is a con-

cern," McCravy said over text.

SCDES reported Friday the organization will continue to investigate the cause(s) of the April fish kill in areas of the lake.

Since the original incident, SCDES has received no new reports of dead fish since April 20.

"Current water quality data and fish sampling results do not indicate concerns related to consuming fish or recreating in the

lake at this time," SCDES posted.

The investigation has not concluded a definite cause of the kill.

"SCDES continues reviewing extensive sampling data, and today's update includes additional data summaries, sampling results and maps from across the investigation area to provide a detailed look at conditions observed throughout the lake."

McCravy said he and state

Sen. Billy Garrett intend to continue pressing state agencies for answers as the investigation continues.

"We need to find out what it is, not just what it's not," McCravy said.

The investigation remains ongoing, and additional updates are expected as state agencies continue testing and review of the event.



JOH McCRAVY

### FREE FARM TOUR

**SATURDAY, MAY 16TH, 10-5**

**ABBEVILLE COUNTY**

**ABBEVILLE COUNTY WELCOME CENTER -**  
107 Court Square, Abbeville

**A PLACE FOR US AT OUR FARM -** 454 Hunter St. Ext., Abbeville

**DIVINE -** 303 West Greenwood St., Abbeville

**ERSKINE COLLEGE FLOWER AND GARDEN SHOW -**  
2 Washington St., Due West

**GINGERICH FAMILY FARM -** 117 Cold Spring Lane, Abbeville

**SACRED CREEK FARM & RETREAT -** 1900 Due West Hwy, Anderson

**SHARON MANOR -** 12 Firehouse Rd., Abbeville

**SWARTZENTRUBER'S BAKERY -** 139 Hwy. 28 Bypass, Abbeville

**TANYARD SPRINGS CATTLE -** 154 Millers Mill Rd., Abbeville

**THE PRODUCE PATCH -** 203 North Main Street, Due West

**WHITE CREEK ALPACA SANCTUARY -** 57 White Creek Rd., Abbeville

[agandarttour.com/abbeville](http://agandarttour.com/abbeville) (864) 366-3806

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Alexis Hames, PharmD



Jenna Pitts, PharmD



Alex Eisenschmied, PharmD



**SELF REGIONAL HEALTHCARE PHARMACY-EPTING**

[selfregional.org](http://selfregional.org)

**Location:**  
520 Epting Ave., Greenwood, S.C. 29646  
(Across from the SCDMV)

**Hours:**  
Monday - Friday, 7 a.m. - 6 p.m.  
Closed Saturday and Sunday

**Contact:**  
Phone (864) 725-4172  
Fax (864) 725-4164

### NOTICE OF SALE BY-PASS SELF STORAGE 1516 By-Pass 72 NE 864-942-8890

Auction Co: Bob Stutler's Auction SCAL #3553  
Notice is hereby given that an auction will be held on May 15, 2026, at 10:00 am for the purpose of satisfying a landlord lien

Loyd Tankersly	309 Lowell St.	Household Goods
Christopher Arbouw	1320 Atlas St. Apt. 303 Rapid City SD 57701	Household Goods
Lisa Griffin	338 Louvenia St.	Household Goods
Evone Tatum	251 Burgess Dr.	Household Goods
Martin Rouse	112 Harrisburg St.	Household Goods
Sirenty Adams	139 Independence Way	Household Goods
Kelvin Stidom	126 Wilson Bridge Rd	Household Goods
Marvin Chapman	1814 ByPass 72 NE Apt. F-2	Household Goods
Joshua Owings	218 Willard Rd	Household Goods
Tangela Robertson	304C New York Ct.	Household Goods
Saleta Dean	2035 Watts Bridge Rd.	Household Goods
Ed Edwards	3101 Walker Rd.	Household Goods

## Kenneth Jones

**PLUM BRANCH** — Kenneth W. Jones, 66, of Plum Branch, SC, passed away Friday, May 8, 2026 surrounded by his family. A beloved son, husband, father, grandfather, friend, coach, and mentor, he leaves behind a legacy of kindness, humility, and service to his community.

Born on September 30, 1959, in Lincolnton, GA, Kenny was the son of the late Mr. Eugene Jones and Mrs. Cornelia Jones of McCormick, SC. Kenny lived in McCormick County his entire life and was deeply rooted in the community he loved so much. A graduate of Strom Thurmond High School, he joined the Army National Guard before starting a 20-year career in the pulpwood industry.

In 2024, he retired from the McCormick Recreation Department after 23 years of dedicated service. During his time there, he made a tremendous impact on the youth of McCormick, and through his work developing athletic facilities and building local recreation programs, he leaves behind a lasting legacy that will continue to benefit the children and families of McCormick for generations to come.

Kenny was a man of few words, but when he spoke, everyone listened. Known for his quick wit, he had a way of making people laugh without ever needing to be the center of attention. He was humble by nature and never sought praise or recognition.

As a devoted Atlanta Braves fan, Kenny rarely missed watching or listening to a game. When he wasn't cheering on the Braves, he enjoyed the simple things in life — spending time hunting, fishing, and relaxing on the lake with family and friends. He especially loved bringing people together at his home, where countless birthdays, holidays, and special celebrations were shared. At nearly every gathering, Kenny could be found manning the grill, making sure everyone was fed, comfortable, and enjoying time together.

Family was the center of Kenny's life and the source of his greatest pride. He dearly loved his children, Cori Ann and Tyler, and shared a special bond with his son-in-law and daughter-in-law, Dan and Brekken. Nothing, however, brought him more happiness than being "Pop Pop" to his grandchildren—Grady, Kensi Drew, Emeri Ford, and Whit. Whether spending time together in person or laughing on FaceTime calls, those moments with his grandchildren were the ones he cherished most.

Kenny did not often express his feelings with words, but the depth of his love was unmistakable. He showed it through his loyalty, his quiet strength, and the many selfless ways he cared for the people in his life. Whether it was family, friends, or someone simply in need, Kenny was always willing to lend a helping hand, and his kindness and steady presence will be remembered by all who knew him.

Survivors include his loving wife of 46 years, Betty Carol Jones; daughter, Cori Ann Sherwin (Daniel Sherwin) of Acton, MA; son, Tyler Jones (Brekken Jones) of Plum Branch, SC; 4 grandchildren, Grayden Ward Sherwin, Kensington Drew Sherwin, Emerson Ford Sherwin, Whitten Luke Jones; mother, Mattie Cornelia Jones of McCormick, SC; brother, Thomas Eugene Jones (Brenda Jones) of Cleveland, TN; brother, James Ira Jones (the late Teri Jones) of Bogart, GA; and several nieces and nephews.

Kenny was preceded in death by his father, Eugene Jones.

Memorial contributions may be made to McCormick Recreation Booster Club at 610 South Mine Street, McCormick, SC 29835.

A private celebration of life will be held at a later date. Strom Funeral Home is assisting the family.

## WATER

From page 1A

calcium hardness and turbidity. Bacteriological testing is also done for Total Coliform and E. coli.

Raw water is tested daily, while finished water is continuously monitored and tested hourly. Online meters also constantly analyze turbidity, pH and disinfectant residual.

For customers concerned about whether their tap water is safe, Meredith said CPW drinking water "meets all current state and federal requirements for consumption."

CPW is not watching any specific lake conditions, contaminants or treatment challenges more closely because of recent public concern about Lake Greenwood. Meredith said over email that CPW continues to monitor raw water composition to determine what treatment is needed to meet state and federal requirements.

CPW has not seen unusual raw water changes beyond an elevated raw water pH already identified, Meredith said. He added CPW did not observe fish-kill-related changes in raw water quality at the intake or in plant operations beyond the temporary rise in pH.

"The high raw water pH has not affected finished water quality," Meredith said in a written response.

### Inside the treatment process

The treatment process begins about 1,500 feet from the plant, where two intake structures draw water from Lake Greenwood, said Danny Ware, CPW water department director.

Ware said the plant was originally built in 1960 as a 3 million-gallon-per-day plant. It has since expanded to a 33 million-gallon-per-day plant. CPW currently averages about 10 million gallons per day, serving current residential and industrial demand. Lake Greenwood also provides water to some Laurens County residents.

The plant has 16 staff members, and another 23 employees work in

the distribution system, Ware said. The plant is staffed 24 hours a day, seven days a week, 365 days a year.

After water is pumped from the lake to the plant, CPW begins treatment with primary disinfection to neutralize potential bacteria in the lake water. The water then moves through a contact chamber, where the disinfectant has time to react.

From there, CPW adds alum, or aluminum sulfate, to promote coagulation.

Ware said lake water naturally contains solids, especially after rain events when runoff can make the lake look muddy or discolored. Alum helps small particles clump together into larger particles so they can settle out of the water.

Ware said the water then moves through flocculators and settling basins, where the heavier particles sink and are collected for removal. The process is similar to the way debris in a swimming pool can settle into one area before being removed, but on a much larger and more controlled scale.

After settling, the water goes through filtration to remove finer particles.

"As far as turbidity and solids removal is concerned, we've already met drinking water standards at that point," Ware said during the tour. "However, we take it to a final level in our next step, is to pass through filtration."

Ware said the filters use different layers to capture fine particles as water moves through them. The water is then balanced for pH and disinfected again before moving into the distribution system.

This process also produces a visible byproduct: the solids removed from the lake water.

Lyle Johnson, CPW water plant superintendent, said the plant removed over 160 tons of sludge last year. Johnson described the material as silt and solids removed from the water.

During certain times of year the dried material can appear black because powdered activated carbon used to absorb taste-and-odor compounds does not with the rest of the solids. Johnson said the plant uses

sun and air to dry the material before it is hauled away to the landfill.

### When lake conditions change

Treatment can change depending on lake conditions.

Meredith said when raw water characteristics change, CPW adjusts its treatment processes and chemical doses to keep finished water within drinking water standards.

For example, when raw lake water becomes more turbid because of rain and higher solids content, CPW can adjust the alum dose to remove the higher concentration of solids. Those decisions are based on continuous online monitoring equipment, jar testing and laboratory analysis, Meredith said.

CPW also monitors for geosmin and MIB, naturally occurring taste and odor compounds that can give water a musty, earthy, lake-like or fishy smell and taste.

During normal geosmin and MIB seasons, which CPW identified as spring, summer and fall, and any other time the compounds are detected, CPW increases analysis for taste and odor compounds to biweekly testing, Meredith said.

Johnson said powdered activated carbon is injected into the water during certain times of year, usually in the spring and fall, to help address those compounds.

"While the compounds are not harmful, they do give off a musty or earthy taste and odor," Johnson said during the plant tour. "Some people are more sensitive to them than others."

Meredith said powdered activated carbon helps capture and remove the compounds through sedimentation and filtration.

### What the regulations require

While the treatment process addresses drinking water before it reaches customers, broader environmental questions about Lake Greenwood involve other monitoring systems and agencies.

Meredith said CPW stays in close contact with Lake Management, the South Carolina Department of Environmental Services (SCDES)

and other users of the source water. CPW's current testing and operational procedures allow it to monitor conditions, make treatment adjustments as needed and continue providing drinking water.

South Carolina's State Primary Drinking Water Regulations require public water systems to follow standards for contaminant levels, treatment techniques, monitoring, reporting, record retention and public notification when violations occur.

The regulations also include specific operation and maintenance requirements for surface water treatment plants, including equipment for daily monitoring of raw, coagulated, settled, filtered and finished water quality.

Those requirements also include monitoring for turbidity, disinfectant residual, pH, temperature, alkalinity and calcium hardness.

Public water systems are also required to keep records of microbiological and turbidity analyses for at least five years and chemical analyses for at least 10 years. Records must include where and when samples were taken, who collected them, the type of sample, the date of analysis, the laboratory or person responsible, the method used and the results.

The regulations require public notice for violations of the State Primary Drinking Water Regulations, including violations involving maximum contaminant levels, maximum residual disinfectant levels, treatment techniques, monitoring requirements and testing procedures.

Meredith said if CPW's water did not meet standards, customers would be notified immediately.

"Greenwood CPW has always taken great pride in not just meeting the required drinking water standards but treating to a degree above and beyond those standards," Meredith said.

CPW also participates in the Partnership for Safe Water program, which is governed by several drinking water organizations, including the American Water Works Association, the Association of Metropolitan Water Agencies, the Association of State Drinking Water Administrators,

### GREENWOOD COUNTY

- Willie Bowers, Greenwood.
- Sandra Love, Greenwood.

### ABBEVILLE COUNTY

- Tommy Hilley, Calhoun Falls.

### MCCORMICK COUNTY

- Kenneth Jones, Plum Branch.

### SERVICES TODAY

- BOWERS, Willie, 3:30 p.m., Blyth Funeral Home Chapel.
- HILLEY, Tommy, 3, Harris Funeral Home, Calhoun Falls Chapel.

### OBITUARY GUIDELINES

• Obituary submissions are submitted online at [memoriams.com](http://memoriams.com) through an approved funeral home. In the event you are not using a funeral home or our offices are closed, you may submit your obituary through [legacy.memoriams.com](http://legacy.memoriams.com). Obituary and Death announcement submissions may not contain digital links to external websites or any reference thereof. Flag emblems are included for free, upon request, for all veteran obituaries. Additional emblems are available for a nominal charge. Up to two photos can be included with paid obituaries only for a per-photo fee. Death announcements are available at [memoriams.com](http://memoriams.com) for a \$30 administrative fee. Death announcements are available at [memoriams.com](http://memoriams.com). They are limited to 50 words and can only contain name, age and address of deceased, wife/husband or widow/widower of, date of death, place of death, home where family members are gathered and funeral home in charge of arrangements. The obituary base fee is \$65, plus \$.85 per word. Submission deadline for placement in the Wednesday & Friday edition is 2:45 p.m. the day before. Submission deadline for the Sunday edition is 6 p.m. on Friday. Obituaries will appear online once submitted. Deadlines are subject to change based on holidays and special circumstances, such as inclement weather. Submitted notices are deemed accurate for ad placement and should be thoroughly reviewed prior to final submission, including pricing considerations. The Index-Journal is not responsible for inaccuracies after final copy submission. Please contact [memoriams.com](http://memoriams.com) Support Team at 877-705-4995 for any assistance with your submission.

## Sandra Love

Sandra Lee Love, 78, of Greenwood, widow of Gary Love, passed away on Monday, May 11, 2026, at Hospice of Laurens County.

Born on May 31, 1947, in Abbeville, she was a daughter of the late Henry Lee Argo and Mary Lavinia Finley Argo. Sandra was a devoted and hardworking woman who spent much of her career employed with Food Lion.

She is survived by her sister, Annette Matthews; her brother, Larry Gene Argo; and nephews, Mackie McKinney and James Lee Argo.

In accordance with Sandra's wishes, no services are planned. Her family and friends hold her memory close to their hearts as they celebrate a life well-lived. Sandra will be remembered with love and respect by all who knew her.

Harley Funeral Home and Crematory ([www.harleyfuneralhome.com](http://www.harleyfuneralhome.com)) is assisting the Love family.



SANDRA LOVE

## Tommy Hilley

**CALHOUN FALLS** — Tommy Dean Hilley, 76, of Calhoun Falls, SC, died Sunday, May 10, 2026, at his home. He was born in Anderson, SC to the late Thomas C. Hilley and Geraldine Ayers Hilley Britt.

Tommy honorably served his country in the United States Army. He dedicated more than two decades of his career to Greenwood Mills and later retired from Mohawk in Calhoun Falls. Tommy was a valued member of his community and took great pleasure in participating in the Calhoun Falls Annual Yard Sale. In his leisure time, he enjoyed hunting, fishing, and caring for animals whenever possible.

Tommy is survived by his children; Linka H. Loftis (William) of Calhoun Falls, Amanda H. Dalampasig of Greenwood and Shane Hilley of Abbeville; two brothers, Mike Hilley of Westminster and Ricky Hilley of Calhoun Falls; three sisters, Debra Batson (John) of Belton, Cindy Chrisley of Calhoun Falls and Sherri Kidd of Florida; eight grandchildren and one great-grandson.

The family will receive friends from 6 to 7:30 p.m., on Tuesday, May 12, 2026, at the Harris Funeral Home, Calhoun Falls Chapel. Funeral services will be 3 p.m., on Wednesday, May 13, 2026, in the funeral home chapel with military honors. Burial will be in M.J. Dolly Cooper Veteran Cemetery at a late date.

The family is at their respective homes.

Memorial contributions in memory of Tommy may be sent the Abbeville Humane Society, P.O. Box 256, Abbeville, SC 29620.

A message of condolence may be sent to the family by visiting [www.harrisfuneral.com](http://www.harrisfuneral.com)

Harris Funeral Home & Cremation Services, Calhoun Falls Chapel, is assisting the Hilley family.

## Willie Bowers

Willie Buchanan Bowers, 82, widow of Bobby Daniel Bowers, passed away Sunday, May 10, 2026, at the home of her daughter.

Born June 7, 1943, in Greenwood, she was a daughter of the late William Carlyle Buchanan and Ruby Banks Buchanan. She was a graduate of Greenwood High School and retired from the Greenwood Mills Cotton Warehouse. She was previously employed with Abney Mills. Mrs. Bowers was a member of Coronaca Baptist Church and most recently attended Greenwood Global Methodist Church.

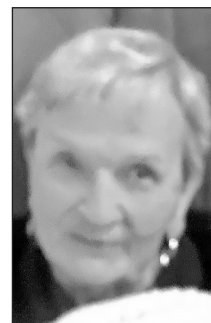
Surviving are two daughters, Kristi (Benji) Boggs of Greenwood and Melissa Bowers (Ben Nelson) of Statesboro, GA; one son, Mike Bowers (Laurie) of Greenwood; one sister, Carlyne B. Taylor of Greenwood; grandchildren, Parker Boggs, Evan Boggs, Bryant Lake, Cece Roberts (Alex), Daniel Jackett, Anthony Jackett, Erica Belmore (Ethan), and Amanda Wideman (Eric); four great-grandchildren; and three fur babies, Katie, Bailey, and Tigger.

She was preceded in death by three sisters, Virginia Buchanan, Betty Kay, and Jackie Buchanan; and one brother, James Robert Buchanan.

Funeral services will be held at 3:30 p.m. Wednesday, May 13, 2026, at the Blyth Funeral Home Chapel with Rev. Tracey Burke officiating. The family will receive friends following the service.

The family will be at the home of her daughter, Kristi, 144 Kensington Dr., Greenwood, SC 29646.

Blyth Funeral Home & Cremation Services is assisting the family of Mrs. Bowers.



WILLIE BOWERS

## Condolences can be submitted at [indexjournal.com/obituaries](http://indexjournal.com/obituaries)

the National Association of Water Companies, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and the Water Research Foundation.

Meredith said CPW received the Phase IV "Excellence in Water Treatment" Award, which recognizes plants that have achieved the highest possible levels of optimized unit process performance.

Ware said during the tour that the Greenwood facility is expected to receive the award for the 20th consecutive year.

He said the program encourages utilities not only to meet drinking water standards required by the EPA and the state, but to exceed them.

"We focus on trying to treat above and beyond the standards," Ware said.

### Beyond the treatment plant

For residents concerned about Lake Greenwood, the drinking water process answers one part of the question — how CPW treats and monitors water before it reaches customers.

But it does not answer every question about Lake Greenwood itself.

Broader questions about fish kills, wildlife, lake ecology, runoff, industrial impacts and source water conditions fall outside the finished drinking water system and involve agencies including SCDES, the S.C. Department of Natural Resources and Greenwood County Lake Management.

Inside the treatment plant, Ware said, the process is more involved than simply taking water from the lake and sending it to customers.

"There's a misconception that we just take water out the lake and pump it to homes," Ware said. "As you can see, it's a very detailed and intricate process."

The Index-Journal reached out independently to state agencies and Greenwood County for comment on Lake Greenwood. That report will run in Friday's edition.

Contact Renee Ortiz at 864-943-5643. Follow her on X: @By\_ReneeOrtiz



# GCS boys soccer wins state

Sports 1B

# Index Journal

INDEXJOURNAL.COM

SERVING OUR COMMUNITY SINCE 1919

VOL. 108, NO. 56

2 SECTIONS, 16 PAGES

WEDNESDAY, MAY 13, 2026

DAILY \$2



RENEE ORTIZ | INDEX-JOURNAL

A photo of Greenwood Police Officer Don "DJ" Keller and his K-9 partner, Vice, is displayed Tuesday, May 12, 2026. Keller, 31, died in the line of duty May 11, according to the Greenwood Police Department. Vice was not injured.

## 'Stand up guy' Son, husband, father, veteran: Greenwood mourns fallen officer

By Renee Ortiz  
rortiz@indexjournal.com

Greenwood Police Chief TJ Chaudoin told his officers, city staff and media at a Tuesday morning press conference that the death of Officer DJ Keller is the "worst nightmare" for any law enforcement leader.

That nightmare became reality Monday afternoon.

Keller, 31, died in the line of duty May 11. According to a report by South Carolina Highway Patrol

Master Trooper Hannah Davidson, the driver of a 2016 Jeep was westbound on East Cambridge Avenue, evading a traffic stop, and crossed the center median, hitting a Greenwood City Police Department Ford Explorer, driven by Keller, head on.

"Today is an extremely difficult day for our department and our community, as we mourn the life of a man that dedicated his life to serving and protecting others," Chaudoin said during the press conference.

Several Greenwood officers stood quietly behind Chaudoin as he spoke, their faces solemn as he described Keller's death and the investigation that have followed.

Chaudoin became emotional at points during the press conference, particularly as he spoke about Keller's service and said Keller had "done nothing wrong before the crash."

Members of Keller's family also attended the press conference and were visibly emotional as Chaudoin and Eighth Circuit Solicitor

David Stumbo spoke about Keller, his wife, his young daughter and the circumstances of the collision.

The room grew heavier when Chaudoin said the driver of the fleeing vehicle was 15 years old.

At about 4:56 p.m. Monday, an officer with the Greenwood Police Department attempted to conduct a traffic stop on a blue Jeep that had been involved in several prior shooting-related incidents, Chaudoin said.

See **OFFICER**, page 7A



MYA ATTEN | INDEX-JOURNAL

A graduate waves to loved ones in the audience during Piedmont Technical College's commencement ceremony.

## 'This is your life'

## PTC graduates encouraged to define their own success

By Mya Atten  
matten@indexjournal.com

For many Piedmont Technical College graduates, commencement marked the end of years spent balancing classes, jobs, family responsibilities and busy schedules outside the classroom.

Graduates crossed the stage Tuesday inside Finis Horne Arena as family members and friends filled the arena with cheers, applause and phone cameras capturing the moment.

Among those celebrated were 343 spring graduates and 170 summer candidates for graduation.

This year's ceremonies were at Lander University because of the ongoing expansion of PTC's Family Life and Conference Center on the Greenwood campus.

Arts and sciences and healthcare graduates were recognized during an 11 a.m. ceremony, while graduates in business, information technology, commercial art, public service and engineering and industrial technology participated in a second ceremony at 3 p.m.



During Piedmont Technical College's commencement, President Hope Rivers presents Braden Cockrell with his diploma.

During the commencement address, Sym Singh, director of state governmental affairs at Scout Motors Inc., encouraged graduates to define success for themselves rather than following someone else's expectations. "This is your life," Singh said. "Not

somebody else's timeline, not social media's expectations. Not the version of success someone else created for you. Your life belongs to you. You define what success means. You decide

See **LIFE**, page 7A

## CPW: Lake water meets standards despite concerns

By Renee Ortiz  
rortiz@indexjournal.com

Recent concerns about Lake Greenwood have raised questions not only about the lake itself, but about what happens before lake water reaches household taps.

The Index-Journal recently toured the W.R. Wise Water Treatment Plant in Greenwood County to learn more about the treatment process.

For Greenwood Commissioners of Public Works (CPW) customers, drinking water begins as raw water drawn from Lake Greenwood.

From there, it goes through a treatment process that includes disinfection, chemical treatment, settling, filtration, pH adjustment and additional disinfection before it enters the distribution system.

CPW officials say the distinction between raw lake water and finished drinking water is important.

### Raw water vs. finished water

Jeff Meredith, CPW general manager, said CPW monitors raw Lake Greenwood water before treatment for pH, alkalinity, temperature, turbidity and total organic carbon. CPW also performs bacteriological analysis of raw water before treatment.

After treatment, CPW monitors finished water for pH, alkalinity, temperature, disinfectant residual,

See **WATER**, page 4A

## District 50 eyes balanced budget amid unknowns

By Mya Atten  
matten@indexjournal.com

Facing uncertain state funding, rising operational costs and an upcoming countywide property reassessment, Greenwood County School District 50 leaders say they are trying to keep next year's budget balanced while continuing to invest in employees and student services.



ANDREW MACKE

During Monday's budget workshop, trustees reviewed a preliminary budget proposal for the 2026-27 school year that includes employee raises, transportation investments and additional special education support.

Andrew Macke, assistant superintendent for business, told trustees the proposal is still evolving as the district waits on final state revenue figures and continues evaluating staffing needs ahead of a final vote in June.

"This is ever changing," Macke said. "What we have for you tonight is just sort of the starting point of our

See **BUDGET**, page 8A

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## LAKELANDS WEATHER

### Today



**Sunny**  
**High: 80**  
**Low: 55**  
 Chance of precipitation:  
 0%

### Saturday



**Sunny**  
**High: 87**  
**Low: 63**  
 Chance of precipitation:  
 0%

### Sunday



**Partly sunny**  
**High: 90**  
**Low: 64**  
 Chance of precipitation:  
 0%

### Monday



**Sunny**  
**High: 91**  
**Low: 65**  
 Chance of precipitation:  
 0%

### Tuesday



**Sunny**  
**High: 90**  
**Low: 66**  
 Chance of precipitation:  
 0%

### Wednesday



**Sunny**  
**High: 89**  
**Low: 64**  
 Chance of precipitation:  
 30%

### Lake levels (in feet)

Clarks Hill: **322.60**  
 +/- full pool: **-7.40**

Greenwood: **439.08**  
 +/- full pool: **-0.92**

Hartwell: **652.94**  
 +/- full pool: **-7.06**

Keowee: **96.82**  
 +/- full pool: **-3.18**

Marion: **74.86**  
 +/- full pool: **-1.94**

Murray: **355.74**  
 +/- full pool: **-4.26**

Russell: **474.32**  
 +/- full pool: **-0.68**

Wateree: **96.63**  
 +/- full pool: **n/a**

## GLEAMNS' Ambra Drummond honored as 2026 staff of the year

GLEAMNS Human Resources Commission Inc. announced that Ambra Drummond, lead case manager specialist in the Laurens Community Services Office, has been named the 2026 Staff of the Year by the South Carolina Community Action Partnership (SCCAP).

The award was presented during the 2026 SCCAP/SCSHSA Spring



**AMBRA DRUMMOND**

changing lives.

Training Conference.

The honor recognizes outstanding service, dedication and a commitment to the mission of community action — helping people and

As lead case manager in Laurens County, Drummond connects individuals and families to essential services that promote stability and self-sufficiency.

"I am truly honored and grateful to receive this award," Drummond said. "Serving our community is not just my job — it's my passion. Every day, I have the opportunity to make a difference in someone's

life, and that is what drives me. I am proud to be part of GLEAMNS and the impact we make together."

In the past year, the Laurens Community Services Office served more than 1,000 households, providing emergency assistance and case management.

Colleagues described Drummond as a leader known for fostering an environment rooted in

service, respect and accountability.

The Staff of the Year Award recognizes individuals who go above and beyond in advancing the mission of community action agencies across South Carolina.

GLEAMNS officials said Drummond's recognition highlights both her individual excellence and the strength of the organization's community services.

## LAKE

From page 1A

Residents have continued to ask whether the event is over and whether the lake is safe.

"We believe this event has concluded and that Lake Greenwood has returned to normal condition," county staff said in a written response. "However we will continue to coordinate with our partners on any additional information received."

SCDES has not identified a definitive cause for the kill.

### Lake water, recreation and drinking water

SCDES said there is a difference between ambient lake water, recreational water and treated drinking water.

Ambient water is water as it naturally exists in lakes, rivers, streams, wetlands, oceans and groundwater. SCDES performs routine ambient water monitoring in many bodies of water, including Lake Greenwood.

The agency said ambient water data collected for Lake Greenwood are normal.

Based on available data, SCDES did not issue recreational-use or public health advisories for Lake Greenwood in response to the fish kill.

The agency also said there are no current fish consumption advisories for mercury or PCBs in Lake Greenwood.

SCDES cautioned that recreating in natural bodies of water carries some risk because natural water is not chemically treated like a swimming pool and may contain naturally occurring bacteria, viruses and other organisms.

Lake Greenwood also serves as a source of public drinking water for Greenwood Commissioners of Public Works and Laurens County Water and Sewer Authority. Water drawn from the lake goes through treatment by public water utilities before it reaches customers.

SCDES said neither drinking water intake is located in the areas where the fish kill was observed. The agency said both utilities have confirmed their drinking water is in compliance with drinking water standards.

### What testing found

SCDES said it reviewed its latest routine monthly ambient water monitoring data from four Lake Greenwood monitoring stations and found no elevated or uncommon readings.

Routine monitoring includes temperature, dissolved oxygen, pH, turbidity, nutrients, metals and E. coli, among other parameters.

In response to the fish kill, SCDES collected water column vertical profiles April 17 at



INDEX-JOURNAL FILE

Lake Greenwood was the site of a recent fish kill that is under investigation by state agencies. nine locations within the fish kill areas. Those profiles tested dissolved oxygen, temperature, pH, turbidity and specific conductivity.

SCDES said those lake vertical profiles appeared typical.

Water samples for harmful algal blooms were also collected April 17 but SCDES said no harmful algal blooms or associated cyanotoxins were detected.

The agency also conducted sediment and surface water sampling of properties near where the fish kill occurred. SCDES said that data indicated no detections or elevated readings.

Live fish were collected in early May for tissue testing. SCDES said samples from largemouth bass, bluegill, flathead catfish, redear sunfish and channel catfish will be tested for several types of contaminants, including metals, pesticides and polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons, or PAHs, a group of chemicals commonly linked to fuel, oil, coal or burned material.

Those results are pending.

### Common causes not indicated

SCDES said pollution, chemical discharge, low dissolved oxygen, temperature, algae, disease and other environmental factors were considered as part of the investigation.

"There is no indication these most common causes of fish kills were a contributing factor to this specific fish kill," the agency said.

However, in a statement released May 6, SCDNR said, "...the event appears consistent with a pollutant or other contaminant being introduced into the lake, resulting in a significant aquatic life mortality event, although a definitive cause has not yet been confirmed."

Some lake water samples showed slightly elevated pH levels, but SCDES said that is not uncommon and can be caused by many factors. The agency said other Piedmont lakes, including Lake Murray, Lake

Hartwell and Lake Wateree, are also showing elevated surface water pH.

Greenwood County staff said Lake Management originally had concerns about elevated pH levels in the lake, but after discussions with water treatment partners and SCDES, county staff were informed pH was not a contributing factor.

SCDES said it is not aware of other species deaths in the area that have been connected to the fish kill or water quality.

The agency said it is aware of reported vulture deaths near the Coronaca Transmission Line near Lake Greenwood since February. Duke Energy's natural resources division conducted a mortality investigation into those deaths, which indicated highly pathogenic avian influenza was the likely cause, according to SCDES.

Greenwood County Lake Management staff said they received various animal-related reports, but staff did not directly observe species other than fish and snails affected by the event.

### Industrial concerns

Members of the community have raised questions about industrial or former industrial sites near Lake Greenwood and surrounding waterways.

SCDES said there are seven permitted wastewater dischargers within 20 miles directly up-gradient of the areas where the fish kill occurred. The agency said it contacted each facility and requested recent discharge monitoring data.

According to SCDES, each facility reported effluent parameters within allowable limits, and no discharger reported process anomalies.

On May 7, SCDES was made aware of a sanitary sewer overflow from Ware Shoals Water and Sewer District, one of the seven permitted wastewater dischargers. The agency said the utility worked quickly to stop the overflow and issued

impact from the Ascend site on Lake Greenwood.

"The agency performed extensive sampling in and around this site as part of the investigation into this fish kill. All of the data collected indicated no connection to industrial activity at the former Ascend Site," SCDES wrote.

SCDES has not identified a current connection between industrial activity, former industrial sites or permitted discharges and the fish kill.

The agency also said three empty drums found about 20 feet from the lake at a property were screened May 1. SCDES investigated the area using technology to determine whether other drums were buried nearby and said none were found.

"We also screened the empty drums and the soil around the drums for organic vapors, and none were detected," SCDES wrote.

### Who monitors the lake

Lake Greenwood is owned by Greenwood County but is a state navigable waterway, meaning it is subject to state regulation under SCDES and SCDNR jurisdiction.

Greenwood County Lake Management is responsible for requirements tied to the county's Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) license.

That includes the shoreline management plan, cultural resources management plan, critical habitat requirements, permitting and inspection of encroachments built in Lake Greenwood and maintenance of county-owned lake

facilities.

SCDES is the primary agency for water quality testing, according to the county.

SCDES said it has worked with SCDNR and Greenwood County officials as part of the fish kill investigation. The agency also said it has been in contact with Greenwood CPW, Laurens County Water and Sewer Authority, nearby property owners and the seven permitted wastewater dischargers located up-gradient of the fish kill area.

County staff said Greenwood County has coordinated with SCDES, SCDNR, Laurens County, CPW and Laurens County Water and Sewer Commission.

### What residents can do

Greenwood County said residents should be mindful of what can wash or drain from their properties into the lake.

"It is Greenwood County Lake Management's stance that it is always better to keep non-naturally occurring influences out of the Lake," county staff said. "It is important to be mindful of any chemicals, waste or excessive sediment that could leave your property."

Residents who see dead fish, discolored water, unusual odors, possible pollution, sick wildlife or other concerns on or near the lake can contact the SCDNR hotline at 1-800-922-5421.

SCDES said it will continue posting updates at [des.sc.gov/fishkills](http://des.sc.gov/fishkills).

Contact Renee Ortiz at 864-943-5643. Follow her on X: @By\_ReneeOrtiz

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## ‘Unchaste’ defense

### Ninety Six denies claims of misconduct; Sill lawsuit shifts to federal court

By Renee Ortiz  
rortiz@indexjournal.com

Two lawsuits involving the Town of Ninety Six, Mayor Gregg Brown and his wife have entered a new phase, with one case moved to federal court and new filings in another case denying allegations of misconduct, defamation and wage violations.



AMANDA SILL



GREGG BROWN

The lawsuits, first reported by the Index-Journal in April, were filed March 31 in Greenwood County Court of Common Pleas by current town employee Amanda Seymour, also known as Amanda Sill, and her husband, former town employee Brian Sill.

Seymour's lawsuit names the Town of Ninety Six, Mayor Gregg Brown in his personal capacity and Jimmie Brown, Gregg's wife, in her personal capacity as defendants. Sill's lawsuit names the town and Jimmie Brown as defendants.

The cases involve allegations tied to town employment, Seymour's role as acting town clerk, Sill's termination, alleged defamatory statements and claims of broader conflict involving town leadership.

All allegations remain unproven and will be decided

#### Prior records request still part of background

Questions about the town clerk position had been raised before the lawsuits were filed.

After meeting minutes were not accepted at a Feb. 17 town council meeting, the Index-Journal sought clarification on Seymour's exact role within council and town administration. The request also sought a clear job description for the town clerk position.

After no response was provided, the Index-Journal submitted a formal Freedom of Information Act request on Feb. 25 seeking records related to the town clerk position, Seymour's official job title, assigned duties, compensation and benefits. Mayor Brown acknowledged receipt of the request the same day, stating, "We will get to work on your request."

As of publication, the town had not produced the requested records or provided a timeline for their release.

The Index-Journal followed up with the town Monday asking when the request would be fulfilled. No response had been received by press time. Under South Carolina's Freedom of Information Act, public bodies generally have 10 business days to respond to written requests for records less than 24 months old and 30 calendar days from final determination to produce nonexempt records.

through the court process.

#### Sill case removed to federal court

Sill's lawsuit was moved May 7 to U.S. District

See **DEFENSE**, page 7A

## SCDES: Ascend site not connected to Lake Greenwood's recent fish kill



INDEX-JOURNAL FILE

The former Ascend industrial site at 1515 Highway 246 South in Greenwood has been under scrutiny following an April fish kill on Lake Greenwood.

By Renee Ortiz  
rortiz@indexjournal.com

A historic industrial cleanup site near Lake Greenwood has not been linked to the recent fish kill or broader water quality concerns at the lake, according to the South Carolina Department of Environmental Services.

#### Agency says sampling found no link

In written responses to The Index-Journal, SCDES said the nearby Ascend site has been under a voluntary cleanup contract (VCC) since 2016 because of known historic contamination. The agency said the property is routinely monitored and has multiple protocols in place to prevent environmental impacts.

"Neither the ongoing environmental monitoring occurring at this site as part of the VCC

nor the investigative sampling recently conducted indicate any impact from the Ascend Site on Lake Greenwood," SCDES said.

The agency also said it has not identified any current connection between industrial activity, former industrial sites or permitted discharges and the April fish kill reported at Lake Greenwood.

"No," SCDES said when asked whether it had identified such a connection. "The agency performed extensive sampling in and around this site as part of the investigation into this fish kill. All of the data collected indicated no connection to industrial activity at the former Ascend Site."

The responses come as public concern has continued around Lake Greenwood following

See **ASCEND**, page 8A

# UNITED

### Residents gather to remember fallen Greenwood Police officer



ROBERT JORDAN | INDEX-JOURNAL

Candles are lit to show support for the family of Greenwood Police Officer Don "DJ" Keller during a Friday vigil at A Quaint Little Place Coffeehouse.

By Robert Jordan  
rjordan@indexjournal.com

People came together in sadness. Maybe some left with hope.

Hope that the loss of Greenwood Police Officer Don "DJ" Keller would lead to something better was the idea many people were reminded of during a prayer gathering at Emerald Gardens Assisted Living and Memory Care. About 60 people attended the Friday event. More than 30 people attended another Friday evening candlelight vigil honoring Keller at A Quaint Little Place Coffeehouse.

"I'm just really, really glad that there are people in our community that still believe in unity, that this is a place of

See **UNITED**, page 9A

#### More information

Additional photos from Friday's events can be found on **page 4A**.

Make sure to check our website: [indexjournal.com](http://indexjournal.com) on Sunday for coverage of the memorial service at Lander for Keller.

## ‘You are ready’: Cambridge Academy celebrates 12 graduates



MYA ATTEN | INDEX-JOURNAL

Twelve students graduate from Cambridge Academy during a May 15 ceremony.

By Mya Atten  
matten@indexjournal.com

For the 12 graduates of Cambridge Academy, commencement was more than the end of high school.

It was a night of reflection and anticipation as graduates crossed the stage Friday evening surrounded by family, friends and teachers.

Valedictorian Bradley Funderburk reflected on the close bond shared among the graduating class, saying many of them had spent

more time together than with their own families.

"We can all agree that we're basically brothers and sisters, and this school has become like a second home to us," Funderburk said. "But now, we're adults, and it's time for us to move on."

Funderburk encouraged classmates to embrace what lies ahead with hope and optimism.

"New experiences, new relationships, and new places to explore are waiting for us," he said. "But challenges will

come too, and when they do, God will always be there to guide and help you."

He reminded graduates to stay grounded in the lessons and relationships that shaped them at Cambridge Academy.

"Remember your roots, and remember what this place, and these people, helped make you into," Funderburk said. "Today is where your book begins. The rest is still unwritten. So,

See **READY**, page 9A

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## ASCEND

From page 1A

a significant fish kill reported April 13-20. SCDES said the investigation into the cause remains ongoing, but no cause has been determined.

SCDES said it considered pollution, chemical discharge, low dissolved oxygen, temperature, algae, disease and other environmental factors as part of its investigation.

"All of these factors and others were considered as part of our investigation, and there is no indication these most common causes of fish kills were a contributing factor to this specific fish kill," the agency said.

### Site has long industrial history

The Ascend/Solutia/Monsanto site is identified in a 2016 voluntary cleanup contract between the former Department of Health and Environmental Control and Ascend Performance Materials Operations LLC. The contract says the property is at 1515 Highway 246 South in Greenwood and includes about 406.8 acres.

According to the contract, the property was the location of several manufacturing operations beginning in September 1960 under the owner/operator Monsanto Chemical Co.

In 1997, Monsanto created Solutia Inc. as a spin-off company, which owned or operated the property for several years until it sold its nylon business to Ascend in June 2009.

The contract states the property had three primary manufacturing operations, including bulk continuous filament, industrial fibers and polymer flake. It also included north and south manufacturing plants, a warehouse, parking areas, a former burn pit and a construction debris storage area.

### What the EPA listing means

The site also appears in U.S. Environmental Protection Agency records under the name Monsanto Textiles, with EPA ID SCD000419069.

Although the site appears in EPA's CERCLA database, it is not listed on the federal Superfund National Priorities List, or NPL.

CERCLA stands for the Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation and Liability Act, the federal law commonly associated with Superfund cleanup authority.

The National Priorities List is EPA's list of some of the nation's most serious contaminated sites eligible for long-term federal Superfund cleanup.

EPA's database lists the Ascend site's non-NPL status as "deferred to RCRA (Subtitle C)." RCRA stands for the Resource Conservation and Recovery Act, the federal law governing solid and hazardous waste.

Subtitle C is the hazardous waste portion of that law. It regulates hazardous waste from the time it is created through transportation, treatment, storage and disposal, and includes permitting, enforcement and cleanup requirements.

In practical terms, the listing means the former Monsanto Textiles site appears in EPA's CERCLA site information system, but is not on the federal priority list for Superfund cleanup.

A site labeled as "Non-NPL" in the CERCLA database (SEMS) simply means it is not currently on the priority list for Superfund-funded long-term cleanup. By adding the tag "Deferred to RCRA," the EPA is signaling that the site is not being ignored—it is simply being handled by a different department with its own set of enforcement tools, and funding for cleanup is paid for by the site owner.

### 2016 cleanup contract info

Volatile organic compounds, or VOCs, had historically been detected in groundwater in the former burn pit and construction debris storage areas on the Ascend site, according to the 2016 voluntary cleanup contract. Both areas were being remediated through groundwater extraction systems.

Groundwater in the former burn pit area flowed generally northwest toward North Creek, while groundwater in the construction debris storage area flowed generally east toward South Creek, which flows into North Creek.

Surface water monitoring was performed near both areas, including upstream and downstream locations on North Creek and South Creek.

The contract also notes monitoring at a nearby pond known as Duck Pond, located about one-quarter mile downstream of the downstream North Creek sampling location.

Groundwater pumped from wells in both areas was carried through underground pipes to the facility wastewater system before being discharged to the Greenwood Metropolitan Sewer Dis-

trict's publicly owned treatment works under an industrial user permit.

Groundwater monitoring showed contamination levels in most observation wells near the former burn pit and construction debris storage areas had either stayed about the same or gone down over the previous few years. Two monitoring locations were exceptions.

According to the contract, those results showed the cleanup system was providing "some hydraulic capture" at the site, meaning the pumping system was helping control the movement of contaminated groundwater.

The contract also says contamination detected in surface water was consistently lower than levels measured in previous years. However, the contract says contamination remained at parts-per-million levels in some areas of the underground groundwater plumes, even as surface water detections had declined.

### Cleanup requirements

Under the 2016 agreement, Ascend agreed to submit a work plan to address gaps in what was known about contamination at the site. The plan was required to focus on previously identified areas of concern, including the former burn pit, the construction debris storage area and the waste pond.

The contract also required a remedial investigation to determine the source, type and extent of contamination.

Ascend was also required to submit a focused feasibility study work plan to evaluate cleanup options for groundwater contamination in the former burn pit and construction debris storage areas. The company then had to carry out the cleanup option selected by the department.

The agreement required written progress reports within 60 days and quarterly after that. Those reports had to include work completed, work planned, sampling and test results and any environmental problems reported during the previous period.

The contract also required public participation. Ascend was responsible for paying related costs, including public notices, building and equipment rentals for public meetings and similar expenses.

The Index-Journal asked SCDES for the current status of the 2016 voluntary cleanup contract, including whether the required investigation and feasibility study were completed, whether a final

cleanup remedy has been selected or implemented and whether the site remains under active monitoring. A response had not been received by press time.

### Other sources checked

SCDES said the Ascend site is one of several regulated environmental sites near Lake Greenwood, but said monitoring at the site and recent sampling conducted during the fish kill investigation have not shown an impact to the lake.

The agency also noted there is another parcel of land between the Ascend site and Lake Greenwood. SCDES said a Phase I environmental assessment report for that parcel was submitted to the agency in April and did not identify environmental concerns.

SCDES said it also reviewed other possible sources, including permitted wastewater dischargers near the area where the fish kill occurred.

The agency identified seven permitted wastewater dischargers within 20 miles up-gradient of the fish kill area. SCDES said it contacted each facility and requested recent discharge monitoring data.

"Each facility reported effluent parameters within allowable limits, and no discharger stated to have had any process anomalies," SCDES said.

### Lake testing found no clear cause

SCDES said it also reviewed routine and investigative lake testing as part of its fish kill investigation.

The agency performs monthly ambient water monitoring at four stations in Lake Greenwood. That testing includes water temperature, dissolved oxygen, pH, chlorophyll-a, turbidity, ammonia, nitrogen, phosphorus, suspended solids, metals and E. coli bacteria.

SCDES said its latest routine monitoring data showed no elevated or uncommon readings.

The agency also collected field readings April 17 at nine locations in areas where the fish kill occurred. Those readings checked dissolved oxygen, temperature, pH, turbidity and specific conductivity at different depths in the water. SCDES said those lake profiles appeared typical.

Water samples for harmful algal blooms were also collected April 17. SCDES said no harmful algal blooms or related cyanotoxins were detected.

On May 7, SCDES was made aware of a sanitary sewer overflow from Ware

Shoals Water and Sewer District, one of the seven permitted wastewater dischargers. SCDES said the overflow was about 20 miles up-gradient of the fish kill area, was quickly stopped and was "highly unlikely" to have contributed to the April fish kill because of its size and distance from the area.

SCDES also conducted sediment and surface water sampling near properties close to where the fish kill occurred. The agency said those samples showed no detections or elevated readings.

When asked whether any unusual or concerning results were found in lake water, sediment or other samples, SCDES said "no," other than some lake water samples showing slightly elevated pH levels. The agency said elevated pH is not uncommon and can be caused by many factors.

Other lakes in the Piedmont ecoregion, including Lake Murray, Lake Hartwell and Lake Wateree, are also showing elevated surface water pH, SCDES said.

### Fish tissue results pending

SCDES also collected live fish May 5-6 for fish tissue sampling.

Fillet and whole-tissue samples from largemouth bass, bluegill, flathead catfish, redear sunfish and channel catfish will be analyzed for metals, organochlorine pesticides, organophosphate pesticides and polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons, known as PAHs.

While those results are pending, SCDES said it is not aware of any fish consumption advisories for mercury or PCBs in Lake Greenwood.

Based on available data, the agency did not issue recreational-use or public health advisories in response to the fish kill.

### Investigation remains open

SCDES said it has been working with the S.C. Department of Natural Resources and Lake Greenwood County officials as part of the investigation. The agency has also been in contact with Greenwood Commissioners of Public Works, Laurens County Water and Sewer Authority, permitted wastewater dischargers and nearby property owners.

For now, the agency says the fish kill investigation remains open, but the data collected so far has not pointed to industrial discharges, the Ascend cleanup site, harmful algae, low dissolved oxygen or other common fish kill causes.

The cause remains undetermined.

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