



Advocates for
Quality Development

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*Advocating for
sound land planning
that protects
what we treasure
as we prepare
for the future.*

*AQD's unpaid
volunteers attend
scores of meetings &
forums to represent
property owner views
on key land &
lake use issues.*

More News

Page 2—

**Annual Meeting Talks
Focus on Explosive
Subdivision Growth & Bad
Creek's Possible Future**

Page 3—

**AQD Leadership Team
Reviews 2022 Initiatives
Related to Infrastructure
& The Environment**

2023 AQD Board

Page 4—

**Junkyard Ordinance
Needed for Safety**

**Responsible
Developments Get AQD
Thumbs Up**

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Membership By Mail or
Online TODAY!**

2022 Lake Overlay Victory Clarifies Shoreline Lot Size Limit

In late 2022, citizens packed Oconee County Council Chambers for a public hearing prior to the Council's third and final reading of an ordinance to revise the Lake Overlay District to require a minimum lot size of 1/2 acre for homes built within 200-feet of Lakes Keowee and Jocassee.

The ordinance passed 4-0 after public comments overwhelmingly favored the change. Representatives from HOAs, AQD, and FOLKS as well as a dozen individuals spoke in favor of the change, clearly indicating property owner sentiment.

Initial Confusion Over Density

AQD worked hard to clear up public confusion and explain why the change was needed. Lake Overlay restrictions—designed to protect the water quality and shorelines of Lakes Keowee and Jocassee—apply no matter how properties in the Overlay's 750-foot boundary are zoned.

The Overlay's original wording limited density to two residences per acre within the 750 feet. The revision did **NOT** change this density limit or the 750-foot boundary.

Many assumed the original density requirement automatically translated into a 1/2-acre minimum lot size. It did not. Owners of multi-acre development parcels could pack homes onto small shoreline



By requiring 1/2-acre waterfront lots, the Lake Overlay revision will help keep our shoreline green & healthy.

lots to maximize their profit on lakefront houses while still meeting the two-residences-per acre density limit by either creating greenspace or large homesites behind the shoreline houses.

Why Shoreline Lot Size Matters

Public comments in support of the Overlay revision noted the varied negative impacts small lots have on water quality and shoreline integrity, including:

- ◆ Increased shoreline disturbance and erosion during construction.
- ◆ More paved, non-permeable surface area for post-construction pollution runoff.
- ◆ Fewer trees and less vegetation to hold soil and provide wildlife habitat.
- ◆ Potential boat traffic congestion in narrow fingers.
- ◆ Detracts from shoreline aesthetics.

AQD Blogs Tackle Current Topics

In 2021, a revamp of AQD's website—www.aqdupstate.com—is enabling the Board to keep members updated on current topics via blog posts and emails.

AQD prepares most blogs, but, with permission, we reprint articles from Duke Energy, DHEC, and nonprofits such as the Lake Keowee Source Water Protection Team (LKSAPT), Friends of Lake Keowee Society (FOLKS), and Upstate Forever.

Our archive lets members who miss initial blogs access them later. Here are a few of our recent blogs:

- ◆ A preview of Duke Energy's Spring 2023 survey of Lake Keowee, and why Duke will be removing non-permitted swim and anchor buoys.
- ◆ An in-depth look at County property tax assessments—facts and fictions.

◆ FOLKS' offer of free fish habitats for private dock installation.

◆ The LKSAPT's program to provide financial assistance to homeowners with failing septic systems.

◆ A three-part series on the Oconee Joint Regional Sewer Authority, looking at its history, problems, financial challenges and proposed expansion projects.

◆ Updates on South Carolina voting procedures and Oconee County Council candidate responses to AQD planning-related survey questions.

◆ Public Service Spotlights highlighting the work of Oconee County commissions and boards and the volunteers who serve.

◆ Backgrounders explaining the need for a Lake Overlay revision to specify lot size minimums for waterfront homes.

Speakers Address Growth Challenges, Potential Bad Creek Storage Expansion

The November 2022 Advocates for Quality Development Annual Meeting featured two informative speakers—Paul Cain, District 3, Oconee County Councilman, and Alan Stuart, Senior Project Manager, Duke Energy.

Following the brief business portion of the meeting, Paul Cain narrated a PowerPoint presentation created by the Oconee County Planning Department.

Bar graphs dramatically captured Oconee County's explosive growth in residential and subdivision applications.

10-Fold Jump in Plat Reviews

In 2015, Planning staffers reviewed 50 plats. By 2020, that number jumped to 493. In 2021, it reached 539. The 10-month 2022 tally already had surpassed 450.



Agricultural Land Under PRESSURE

Subdivision Applications

In 2015, Oconee's planning staff received six applications. By 2020, it was vetting 23, almost four times as many. The partial count for 2022 reached 26 by late October.

Residential Building Requests

In 2015, applications for residential buildings totaled 762. By 2020, staffers were looking at 932. The application figure for 2022 sat at 1,250 with two months to go.

Growth Concentrated in East

Maps plotting new residential addresses illustrated that the new waves of residential and subdivision growth are concentrated on Oconee County's eastern border with Pickens County and, to a lesser extent, in Oconee's southern tip.

"Both areas are predominately zoned control-free," Councilman Cain noted. "That means the Department has an extremely limited ability to address potential subdivision problems related to infrastructure or traffic. It is also worrisome that many of the new developments are taking productive agricultural land out of production."

The Councilman added he does not oppose student housing developments that introduce talented young people to Oconee County. "I want them to build careers and businesses here. We just need better planning."

Curb Cuts & Stormwater

Cain reviewed ongoing Planning Department efforts to limit curb cuts on Hwy. 123 as well as its proactive efforts to create a storm-water ordinance.

Numbers, Voices Count

Cain stressed that silence is not golden. "When Council only hears from a vocal minority that opposes planning initiatives, it is very difficult to justify votes for change."

He urged voters who favor measures to establish subdivision approval criteria related to roads and other infrastructure to speak up. "Come to meetings, speak during Public Comment sessions, send emails to the County Clerk to include in meeting minutes. Numbers matters."

DUKE ENERGY WEIGHS BAD CREEK EXPANSION

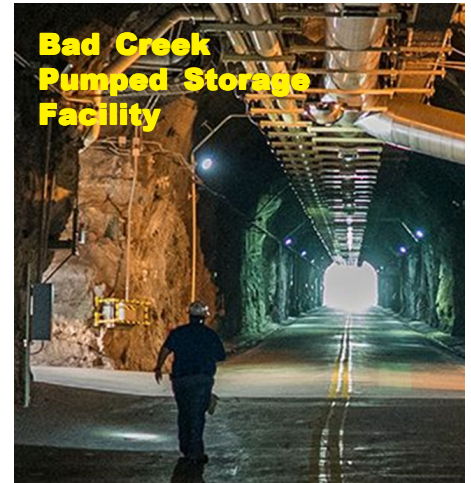
Following Cain's talk, Alan Stuart offered an in-depth look at Duke Energy's Bad Creek Pumped Storage Station and a future expansion option.

Emissions-Free Power

Bad Creek currently can provide the homes of nearly 1 million regional customers with emissions-free hydro-electric power.

Stuart explained that Bad Creek operates like a massive battery, quickly generating or storing power in response to electricity supply and demand.

When demand is low at night and on weekends, water is pumped from Lake Jocassee to the Bad Creek Reservoir, which acts as a battery. When demand is higher, release of



Bad Creek Pumped Storage Facility

water to Lake Jocassee, 1,200-feet below, can produce needed electricity. In 2023, Duke Energy will finish upgrades to the existing facility to boost its capacity to 1,400-megawatts.

"We're committed to achieving net-zero carbon dioxide emissions by 2050," he says. "Our growing reliance on solar energy increases the need to store energy for times when the sun doesn't shine. That's why we're looking at a second underground powerhouse that could potentially double Bad Creek's storage and pumping capacity."

Relicensing Efforts Underway

While a final decision on the Bad Creek II Complex is months away, Duke Energy has already filed a preapplication with the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) stating its intent to relicense Bad Creek for 40 or 50 more years.

During the multiyear licensing process, state, federal and local stakeholders like AQD will provide input. AQD is represented on study committees looking at potential environmental and operational impacts.

Bad Creek II Possibilities

The potential Bad Creek II powerhouse could contain variable-speed units, capable of regulating both generating and pumping modes. This would help the utility respond more quickly to needs related to renewable energy resources.

Stuart notes Bad Creek II construction could last six to seven years, with units potentially in service by 2033.

2022 Recap: Infrastructure & Environment

AQD's leadership team includes directors and non-Board members who attend meetings of the Oconee Joint Regional Sewer Authority, and Oconee County Council, Planning Commission and Board of Zoning Appeals.

Others serve as AQD Stakeholder representatives on the Lake Keowee Source Water Protection Team, the Keowee-Toxaway Habitat Enhancement Program, and relicensing of Duke Energy's Bad Creek Pumped Storage project. AQD is also a member of the Oconee Chamber of Commerce. Here are activity highlights in 3 interest areas.

Oconee Sewer 2022 Update

◆ The Authority began to tackle a repair and upgrade plan that may cost up to \$50 million. It's seeking a \$10 million grant to combine with a 15% matching funds SC infrastructure grant to help finance initial projects.

◆ Consultant W K Dickson identified priority inflow & infiltration (I&I) problem areas related to overflows that prompted a DHEC consent decree.

◆ Bids for the Sewer the South project to service a County industrial park and the I-85 Welcome Center came in slightly above \$12 million—about \$5 million above available funds. Oconee County Council voted to provide half the overage. If added state funding isn't found, the project could be tackled in phases to cut initial costs. Postponing the Welcome Center connection would trim \$3 million.

◆ Anderson County expressed interest in a joint project to sewer northern Anderson County and more areas in southern Oconee. A consultant has estimated the potential 20-year cost as \$48 million if Sewer



the South is completed and effluent pumped to an upgraded Conross Sewer plant. The cost could climb to \$60 million if a new plant were built.

LKSWPT Focus: Septic Failures

AQD is a non-profit member of the Lake Keowee Source Water Protection Team (LKSWPT) established during Duke Energy re-licensing of its Keowee-Toxaway Hydroelectric Project. The

LKSWPT mission is to protect water quality in Lake Keowee.

◆ In 2022, LKSWPT repaired or replaced 20 failing septic systems, preventing an estimated 4.84 billion bacteria from draining into watershed waterways.



◆ A new SCDHEC grant of \$663,227 (including matching funds and in-kind services) will allow LKSWPT to keep reducing bacterial, nutrient, and sediment pollution. Working with landowners and grant partners, it plans to repair or replace 32 additional malfunctioning septic systems, fix Mile Creek Park's septic system drain field, and pursue conservation easement protection of more than 200 acres.

◆ Education outreach is part of the mission. On the LKSWPT website—www.lakekeoweewatershed.org—you'll find best practices information to keep your septic system healthy as well as how to get help if it's failing.

Habitat Enhancement Program

The Keowee-Toxaway Habitat Enhancement Program (HEP) is a cooperative initiative of Duke Energy and community Stakeholders like AQD and FOLKS.

◆ In 2022, three projects proposed by FOLKS received grants.

◆ Mossback fish attractors will be assembled and installed under 114 Lake Keowee private piers.

◆ The shorelines of Great Blue Heron Rookery Island will be stabilized using matting and native plants.

◆ In partnership with SC DNR, FOLKS will install 60 Mossback fish habitat and 4,000 plantings in select coves and shoreline areas.

◆ High Falls County Park received the fourth award for a Pollinator Garden.

◆ HEP also reported 2021 project award accomplishments, including:

◆ A funding partnership between HEP & The Nature Conservancy that supported fire crews to provide planning support, burn line preparation, and personnel and equipment assistance to complete five burns impacting 1,410 watershed acres. Controlled burns reduce combustible material to reduce forest fire risk.

◆ Naturaland Trust applied HEP grants to acquire & protect a 189-acre tract along Scenic Hwy 11, and a 73.74-acre Rocky Bottom tract. An archaeological survey of the Rocky Bottom tract was initiated to understand the origin of the extensive rock walls in the western section. The survey unearthed petroglyphs and signs of Native American presence.

◆ A total of 59 fish habitat kits were installed in fish habitats at South Cove County Park, High Falls County Park, Mile Creek County Park, and Stamp Creek Fishing Pier.

Throughout the year, AQD Blogs provide insights into these programs.

AQD Board

At AQD's 2022 annual meeting, John Eagar, Gary Owens and Bob Royer were reelected to the Board.

AQD's directors live in seven different Oconee and Pickens County communities. Here are AQD's Board members for 2023.

Jim Codner, South Oak Pointe
John Eagar, Indian Oaks
Sharon Hamilton, Port Santorini
Gary Owens, Wynward Pointe
Robert Royer, Beacon Shores
Sue Williams, Highlands (Pickens)
Gerry Yantis, Waterford

Want To Help Tackle Issues?

The AQD Board would love your help with researching issues, member communications, position statements, stakeholder commitments and other projects. To find out more about how you can help, email us:

aqdupdate@gmail.com

Junkyard Ordinance For Road, Public Safety

Regulating Oconee County junkyards isn't a new topic to folks who've sat through Planning Commission meetings over the years. As we go to press, it appears 2023 will see the Commission recommend County Council consider a draft Junkyard Ordinance. *(Only County Council can adopt ordinances.)*

AQD urges concerned citizens to email their representatives, speak during Public Comment, and flock to Public Hearings to show support.

At this time, a key outstanding issue regards grandfathering—in other words, some want to exempt existing junkyards from any new regulations that may be enacted.

Grandfathering Safety Hazards?

AQD believes the County should never grandfather conditions that pose potential safety hazards to citizens. Examples include dangers to motorists if junkyard debris finds its way onto roads or idling machinery blocks lanes and stymies traffic flow.

And motorist safety isn't the only concern. In Junkyard Ordinance drafts published on the Oconee County website, rationale for an ordinance includes: potential threats of injury to

children and others attracted to the premises, water pollution, fire hazards, breeding grounds for pests, and depreciation of nearby property values.

Fair Time Extensions

The draft ordinance notes junkyards provide a necessary service and contribute to Oconee's economy and tax base. Proponents of grandfathering current facilities argue forced changes might hurt profits or prompt closures.

AQD believes granting existing facilities reasonable time extensions

to comply with new regulations offers a fair solution for business owners without sacrificing public safety.

Requirements?

What regulations might be

imposed? Proposed requirements include: fences to keep debris within perimeters; no use of buffer areas for loading/ unloading; specific setbacks from churches, schools, dwellings, day care, recreational facilities & highways, plus plantings for visual screening. Existing junkyards also might require permits to expand operations.

If you want junkyards regulated, speak up at Commission meetings and County Council!



Thumbs Up For Responsible Development



There's a key word in AQD's name—Advocates **FOR** Quality Development. Our organization fully supports responsible development in Oconee and Pickens Counties.

This includes commercial, residential, recreation and infrastructure projects designed to add jobs, expand housing options, improve quality of life for all citizens, and provide tourists with even more reasons to visit.

In 2023, one such project will open in the former mill town of Newry. The Greenville-based M. Peters Group describes its forte as "transforming urban and suburban blight into places that contribute to a community's health, economic vitality, and quality of life."

The Newry project has restored the former mill building and company store. Together these buildings will house 79 apartments, an upgraded post office, a café, and event center. A new building adds 118 more apartments. Nature trails, a pedestrian bridge, and public green space are landscaping bonuses.

AQD Membership Mail Form & Online Options

Join or renew your AQD membership! Use this form OR visit www.aqdupstate.com to join and pay online. Family Members should list everyone in household. Memberships may be canceled at any time. However, contributions are nonrefundable. Though Advocates for Quality Development, Inc., is a nonprofit corporation, contributions are NOT tax-deductible.

Make checks payable to AQD. Return form to AQD, P.O. Box 802, Seneca, S.C. 29679

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CITY _____ STATE ____ ZIP _____

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MEMBERSHIP TYPE:

NEIGHBORHOOD _____

INDIVIDUAL \$30 FAMILY \$50
 DONOR \$100 HOA/BUSINESS \$100

COMMENTS: _____

ADDITIONAL CONTRIBUTIONS WELCOME!