

# VOICES

## THE GREENVILLE NEWS EDITORIAL

### Help ReWa protect our water sources

By John V. Boyette, Jr.

The Reedy River is a source of great pride for Greenville citizens. It is a part of the promising formula for our Upstate's continued success. We should keep in mind the Reedy is also a huge element of the state's water environments and one the community should strive to protect. Recent news articles published in the Upstate have portrayed the Reedy River as having little hope for recovery and have reported that the Saluda River has been designated as one of the most endangered rivers in the country. Renewable Water Resources believes that the conditions of these rivers have improved and will continue to improve.

The South Carolina Department of Health and Environmental Control (SCDHEC) routinely monitors the conditions of the five state watersheds including the Reedy and Saluda Rivers. From the data gathered SCDHEC compiles a list of rivers and lakes where improvement is needed, and the target date for changes to be accomplished. The Reedy and Saluda Rivers merge many miles south of Greenville to flow into Lake Greenwood, which has historically had algal bloom problems. The Reedy River arm of Lake Greenwood has been designated a location where a reduction in phosphorus input would improve these problems. Of course, the ideal situation would be not having any pollutants in the water. However, removing 100% of all nutrients such as phosphorus and nitrogen from the water ReWa releases back into the environment would require significant plant upgrades to all of ReWa's wastewater treatment plants and could drastically increase customer fees. And doing so would still not account

for or remove nutrients from naturally-occurring or uncontrolled sources. Instead, with ongoing monitoring and permit updates, SCDHEC and EPA work to establish the most achievable and environmentally protective balance.

The sources of these nutrients enter our rivers and lakes in two ways: directly or indirectly as runoff. Direct sources are inputs that are clearly identified and regulated, like wastewater treatment plants. Indirect sources include runoff from lawns, golf courses, roadways, and farm land and natural sources. Phosphorus is introduced into the environment through hundreds of daily occurrences.

ReWa's compliance with minimizing phosphorus and other nutrients under the National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) program has been recognized by the National Association of Clean Water Agencies (NACWA) in its Compliance Excellency Program for years. ReWa's Mauldin Road wastewater plant, a main discharge point location on the Reedy, has achieved 100% compliance with its phosphorus permit limit for eight consecutive years as has the ReWa Lower Reedy wastewater treatment plant. The 1988 technology improvements to the Mauldin Road plant successfully reduced the plant's phosphorous output by more than 85% and ReWa has continued to evaluate how it can effectively reduce that level further. ReWa's Executive Director Ray T. Orvin, Jr. says, "ReWa feels it is absolutely necessary to do its part in reducing the amount of pollutants introduced into the environment. Since 1988, we have been incrementally improving our nutrient removal process every year and will continue to do so.

#### GUEST COLUMN



John Boyette is the current Chair of the Board of Renewable Water Resources. He has served on the Board for five years.

However, ReWa is only one part of the solution. Our water bodies need similar improvements in all sources, including indirect sources like households and agriculture. Success for our water bodies will require numerous partnerships and extensive support from the community and the individual."

ReWa has a track record of protecting our environmental resources and will continue to comply with the regulations that offer the most effective solution without overburdening our customers. In addition to efforts to remove these pollutants like phosphorous after they are in the water, we continue to champion prevention as the best solution.

To do our part as a community to improve our state's waterbodies, we should reduce our use of household products that are not environmentally-friendly. If you are not sure about what is in your products, you can start by simply using less of them. Common items like detergents, soaps and fertilizers often contain harmful elements, and are often used in excess. Visit [www.rewaonline.org/how-can-i-help.php](http://www.rewaonline.org/how-can-i-help.php) to access helpful tips and information about reducing nutrient amounts as a community.