

Public to find out what's in Lake Conestee

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Years of testing turns up tons of pollutants

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Residents will get a chance to learn what the state has found over six years of environmental testing at Lake Conestee at a public meeting Oct. 17.

Located about a mile

downstream from a sewage treatment plant and about five miles south of Greenville, the 145-acre lake has been a dumping ground for decades of industrial runoff.

Residents say it is so polluted that it smells like raw sewage on hot days. Trash litters its shoreline and, in April, the state issued an advisory that its fish are contaminated with mercury.

The meeting will be at 7 p.m. in the Fellowship Hall of Victory Chapel Baptist Church, 9 South Pinelake Circle.

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LAKE

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Contaminants have accumulated in the soils that used to be covered by the lake, according to Angela Gorman, project manager for the site with the state Department of Health and Environmental Control.

"These contaminants came from more than 100 years of industrial discharges into the Reedy River upstream of the lake," she said.

The private, non-profit Conestee Foundation, which owns the

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— DHEC's Angela Gorman

lake, is developing an environmental teaching complex at the site.

Trails and boardwalks will be opened to the public this month as the first phase of the Lake

Conestee Nature Park that will feature an environmental teaching center to study the long-term effects of the contamination, according to DHEC.

"While our studies have found contamination in the soils and sediments in and around the lake, the property can be used with some restrictions to prevent exposure to the contamination," Gorman said.

"The Conestee Foundation is only allowing activities on the property that will safely limit exposure to the contaminants."

Restrictions can be re-evaluated if the contamination levels decline, Gorman said.

