



February 13, 2012

ACA National Office
C/O Cate Huxtable
108 Hanover Street
Fredericksburg, VA 22401

The council of Batesburg-Leesville or whom it may concern:

The American Canoe Association (ACA) is writing you concerning the future of the Edisto River's health and to voice a concern about a likely negative impact on the river, both ecologically and recreationally. The ACA is a national, 501(c)(3) non-profit organization that is in service to the broader paddling public by providing education on matters related to paddling, supporting stewardship of paddling environments, and enabling programs and events to support paddlesport recreation. The ACA is the oldest member-based recreation and conservation association in the United States. Since 1880, supporting healthy waters and promoting good environmental stewardship within the paddling community has been one of the ACA's primary tenets. We are writing to discourage the current agreement between Saluda County Water and Sewer Authority (SCWSA) and the town of Batesburg-Leesville (B-L) regarding the transfer of waste water to the B-L Waste Water Treatment Plant (WWTP). If allowed, the current agreement would sanction one million additional gallons per day to be processed and discharged directly into Duncan Creek, a tributary of the Edisto River, causing the B-L WWTP to potentially exceed its permitted discharge capacity during the wet season. In those events, untreated water would be discharged directly into the creek, jeopardizing the health and future of the Edisto River and all things that depend on it.

The Edisto River, reported to be the longest free flowing blackwater river in the nation, is an iconic river for the South Carolina Lowcountry. Named for the darkly stained waters that result from tannins leached from fallen vegetation, a blackwater river is characterized by its acidic nature and distinctive chemical concentrations. Differing significantly from whitewater rivers, blackwater rivers, like the Edisto, are ecologically unique and sustain vastly different biological diversity than their whitewater counterparts. Harboring spawning sites for the endangered shortnose sturgeon and its cousin, the Atlantic sturgeon, the Edisto River provides invaluable resources and habitats to local wildlife and those who value it. Combining with the Ashepoo and Combahee, the Edisto forms the ACE Basin, one of the largest undeveloped estuaries on the east coast of the United States and stands as a prime model for cooperation in conservation through the ACE Basin Project.

In addition to the physical traits and ecological values that make the Edisto a unique river system, the Edisto has unparalleled opportunities to paddlers from or visiting South Carolina. Part of the South Carolina National Heritage Corridor, the Edisto River provides South Carolina with a valuable asset for recreational tourism by attracting canoeists, kayakers, and stand up paddleboarders to its

many blueways, paddling trails, sanctuaries, and access points. Nearly 25 years ago, more than 250 miles of the Edisto River system were classified as superior resources of statewide or greater significance for flatwater and backcountry boating. The Edisto River Canoe and Kayak Trail flows 56-miles down the main stem of the river, and the North Fork Edisto Blueway offers 34-miles of more technical paddling for experienced boaters.

Regardless of where people paddle on the Edisto River, its beauty and value as a natural resource to South Carolina is undeniable. Within America's river system, the Edisto is thought of as truly unique due to its traits and accessibility. We ask, therefore, that you carefully consider your decision when evaluating the current agreement to accept more wastewater to ultimately be discharged into the Edisto. The South Carolina Department of Health and Environmental Control has already identified that "The Town of Batesburg/Leesville has the only water and sewer service in the area," while also stating "there is a low potential for growth in this rural, undeveloped watershed." As it stands, the current agreement between SCSWA and B-L proposes that an additional one million gallons per day be processed and discharged at the B-L WWTP, an addition that puts the plant in the precarious position of maxing out their permitted processing capacity (even exceeding it during the wet season) and jeopardizing the health of the Edisto and all the resources it provides.

The ACA encourages that you carefully and cautiously consider this matter, both on the behalf of paddlers and the outstanding recreational opportunities on the river, but more importantly on behalf of the ecological health and prosperity of this vital and exceptional river system. The Edisto is an invaluable resource to the state of South Carolina, and we hope that it is protected so that it can be appreciated by generations to come.

Thank you for your time and consideration,



Cate Huxtable
Stewardship Coordinator, ACA | Canoe – Kayak – Raft – SUP – Rescue