

THE COUNTY EDGE

More water on the way

Neighbors to increase county's supply



Openshaw

By Ritchie E. Starnes

MONROE - Less than a week after the Union County Board of Commissioners were blasted for considering a water allocation policy that put future development over existing water customers, the county has identified more water.

Effective Oct. 1, Lancaster County (S.C.) agreed to provide Union County with an additional 3 million gallons per day (MGD), dubbed an "interim temporary transfer," said Commissioner Lanny Openshaw. The contract with the Catawba River Supply Project runs through Oct. 1, 2009.

On Monday (Oct. 13), the county commissioners traveled to meet with Anson County leaders about increasing its water supply. Although Union County is currently contracted to receive 4 MGD from Anson, existing infrastructure only enables the transport of 2 MGD. Union County will not be finished with the upgrades for another 1 1/2 to 2 years. But, Union's leaders asked that Anson agree to allocate 6 MGD.

"They can give us 4 (MGD) when we're ready, but they can't give us 6 (MGD) for another three years," Openshaw said. "We agreed to move forward with plans for 6 (MGD)."

Anson officials also expressed concern about the county's minimum usage. While Union counts 2 MGD coming from its eastern county neighbor, the daily average is actually less than 1 MGD.

"They want us to increase our minimum usage," Openshaw said. "They're tying up 4 (MGD) and only billing for 1 (MGD)."

Openshaw added that they also talked about a long-term project.

"We talked about a large amount of water thereafter," he said.

The Catawba River Supply Project will bill the county at the same rate it charges Lancaster County in the newly inked contract that was requested by Union County Public Works. Openshaw said the agreement calls for Lancaster County to be allowed to implement emergency tie-ins along Lancaster County's panhandle at U.S. 521, which Union will share in the cost of the added infrastructure.

Currently, 90 percent of the county's water supply derives from the Catawba River. Roughly 43 percent of the county's population resides inside the Catawba's basin with balance in the Yadkin-Pee Dee.

In order to conserve water, consultants have recommended that the county implement a one-day assigned weekday irrigation instead of weekend watering to prevent the county from spiking above its 20 MGD capacity.