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# Excess development?

*FERC shouldn't dismiss Interior's comments on Duke*

We hope the federal agency looking at how Duke Energy manages its lakeshores will seriously consider the U.S. Interior Department's opinion: that Duke isn't adequately balancing recreational, scenic and environmental uses with development.

The Federal Energy Regulatory Commission must decide whether to OK Duke's revisions to its shoreline management plan, which shows current and future uses of all the shorelines of the 11 lakes it manages. The revised plan before FERC classifies 76 percent of the total shore as developed or suitable for development; 24 percent is off-limits.

The Interior Department, in a filing with FERC, urged that 50 percent of the total shoreline stay undeveloped. It is also concerned about two proposed marinas at lakes Norman and Wylie.

Duke's situation is interesting. Duke Power Co., now part of Duke Energy, brought electric power and with it, economic prosperity, to the Piedmont a century ago by damming the Catawba River to build hydroelectric plants. Because it bought the land for a public purpose, with government help, its federal licenses require it to balance water users' interests - and to prevent more degradation of natural resources.

But another Duke Energy subsidiary, Crescent

Resources, is busily developing the land that Duke Power acquired decades ago. And most experts agree the single biggest threat to the river and its lakes and coves comes from development.

Duke says it cares about the lakes' environmental health; it has pledged to put conservation easements along nearly 200 miles of the river and its tributaries. It's donating \$500,000 to help landowners who want to use similar easements, and, with conservation groups, it has helped protect hundreds of acres of lakeside property.

Further, Crescent Resources' projects aren't unplanned, rogue developments. They follow local land use and development ordinances. If those rules aren't adequate, blame elected officials, not Duke. On the other hand, Crescent Resources has sued to overturn a new Burke County land use ordinance designed to protect Lake James from excess development.

Duke is profiting from developing land it acquired, with government help, as a public resource. It should be held to high standards for both public access and for environmental protection of those precious resources the government allows it to manage. The worries of the Interior Department and its U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service are valid. FERC should pay heed.