

POSITION STATEMENT

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE LOWER SALUDA RIVER FROM THE SALUDA RIVER CHAPTER OF TROUT UNLIMITED

The objective of this Position Statement is to outline lower Saluda River recreational recommendations for a variety of users, including trout fishing, and to document environmental, fisheries, and other concerns of the Saluda River Chapter of Trout Unlimited. The following recommendations support this objective.

1) BOAT ACCESS

Motor boat access should be limited to existing landings at Saluda Shoals Park, Hope Ferry Landing (accessed from Corley Mill Rd.), and the current Gardendale Put-in site. This will be a conversion at Gardendale from a "throw-in" to a fully useable ramp. A ramp for trailer launching of small boats would be appropriate at Gardendale Put-in for safer boating, and to eliminate the need to carry boats and motors to the "throw-in" site. No additional new ramps for motor boats should be built on the Lower Saluda River, including the proposed old "fire department" landing immediately below the I-26 bridge on the East bank. Canoe and kayak access sites should be limited to Saluda Shoals Park, Hope Ferry Landing, Gardendale Put-in, and the proposed River Center access located immediately above Mill Race Rapids on the Columbia side of the river.

2)HIKING TRAILS

Provide a walking trail from the Riverbanks Zoo along the entire scenic river corridor along the East side of the river. This would include the proposed Greenways Trail envisioned by the River Alliance, and an extension from that trail upstream from I-26 through the Saluda Shoals Park to the old trestle below the Lake Murray Dam, which marks the beginning of the wild and scenic corridor.

3) MOTOR BOAT USE OF THE RIVER

Motor boat use of the river should not be allowed below Highway I-26 to the Mill Race Rapids, for both safety and usage management reasons. Motor boaters would have access to nearly 80% of the river with access from the dam to I-26. If restriction of motor boats is not legal because of navigable water laws, then launch sites should be restricted as noted above, and an extensive safety campaign undertaken on the dangers of using motor boats below Highway I-26.

4) COMMERCIAL USE

These activities need to be regulated and licensed to preserve a "natural area" experience. We need to learn and profit from experiences on similar river resources in South Carolina, such as the Chattooga River. A realistic, sensible approach is needed when regulating raft and kayak numbers, and the degree of daily usage. **Unregulated commercialization of the Saluda River must be avoided so as to preserve this area's integrity.**

5) LAW ENFORCEMENT

SC DNR should provide full time law enforcement to the river, with heavy coverage on weekends and late afternoon, especially immediately after trout stockings when most violations occur.

6) POLLUTION

POINT SOURCE:

SC DHEC should become more pro-active in establishing, and enforcing, higher water quality standards for the river, and in closing all sewage discharges as soon as possible, beginning with the discharges at Saluda Shoals Park and Gardendale, which are very unsightly.

NON-POINT SOURCE:

More catch basins should be constructed to catch and filter run-off from highways, large parking lots, and other sites that contribute to this problem.

SEDIMENTATION:

Reduce silt from construction projects that are affecting the river adversely, especially Rawls Creek and 12 Mile Creek, which are carrying heavy silt loads from construction activity upstream in Lexington County.

Violators of pollution, from any source, should be aggressively prosecuted.

7) DAM WATER RELEASES

Establish published water release schedules, providing periods of minimum flows during weekends when wading fishermen can use the river. Water levels below 500 cfs (cu. ft./sec.) should be available during the day on weekends. Minimum flows should be maintained to at least 300 cfs throughout the year, until an optimum flow regime is established by SC DNR. SC DNR should complete the IFIM (Incremental Flow Incremental Methodology) study of the Saluda River to establish optimum flow and dissolved oxygen levels needed for aquatic life. The present regime of 180 cfs is not adequate to assimilate current wastewater discharges, especially after heavy rains, and the observed large areas of exposed aquatic habitat indicate significant impact on aquatic organisms and fish.

8) DISSOLVED OXYGEN

More aggressive efforts are needed to reach the state standard of 5 mg/liter of dissolved oxygen to support fish and other aquatic life. SC DHEC and SC DNR

should require SCE&G to make this a high priority goal, and to expedite their efforts of turbine venting and baffles with a sense of urgency.

9) FISH MANAGEMENT

STOCKING OF TROUT:

Minimum size of trout to stock should be eight (8) inches as part of the current SC DNR "put-grow-take" trout management program because of the limited holdover due to low dissolved oxygen in the early fall. A reduced trout daily creel limit should be established because of heavy fishing pressure. More educational and law enforcement efforts by SC DNR in support of the current trout management program are needed. Stop stocking trout after April 15th when striped bass, after spawning in the Congaree, are migrating in large numbers into the lower Saluda as a thermal refuge, and feed heavily on newly stocked trout. Alternate harvest management regulations need to be developed if the current "put-grow and take" scheme is not workable due to heavy angler pressures and related harvests.

One alternative would be to establish a "put and take" fishery with ten (10) inch or larger trout stocking. Another possibility would be a minimum harvest size of ten (10) inches for trout, or a delayed harvest regulation could be adopted to allow the trout time to grow, so as to provide quality angling.

Do not permit trout to be used as bait for catching striped bass, even if caught by legal means (rod and reel). The use of trout as bait defeats the purpose of the trout-stocking program. It is simply too expensive to invest several dollars in raising each trout, and then allowing it to be used for this purpose. Consideration should be given to using artificial lures with "single hooks only" in key trout habitat areas of the Saluda such as the island stretches below Highway I-26, and at Corley Island. This regulation change should be made in conjunction with any minimum size limits or delayed harvest regulations that require releasing undersized or out of season fish.

10) SALUDA SHOALS PARK

ACCESS:

Priority should be given to footbridge construction on the trail downstream to Corley Island.

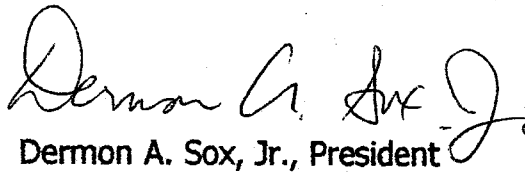
EXTENSION:

The Saluda River Corridor Plan envisioned a trail on the east bank, extending from Riverbanks Zoo to the dam. Full support on this plan is expected from the Saluda Shoals Park, whether through park expansion upstream, or through cooperation in connecting a trail on either end of the park. Expansion of the park riverfront should be given a higher priority than constructing facilities, or purchasing non-riverfront lands, in recognition of the very essence of why the park was conceived along the Saluda River.

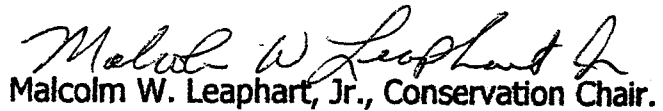
EDUCATION:

The Saluda River Chapter of Trout Unlimited is supportive of coldwater education, and will work with the Saluda Shoals Park Education Committee to try to help develop effective programs and facilities.

Submitted and approved by the Board of Directors of the Saluda River Chapter of Trout Unlimited on September 9, 1999.



Dermon A. Sox, Jr., President



Malcolm W. Leaphart, Jr., Conservation Chair.