

# Gills Creek In The News

*August 28, 2018 - Local - The State*

## **3 years after the flood, this Columbia restaurant has finally reopened**

By [Sarah Ellis](#)

"COLUMBIA, SC - Twenty-eight years after getting their start in business and nearly three years after losing that business to a ruinous flood, Yogesh and Jyotsna Thakker are right back at the beginning.

The early years of running a restaurant are difficult. Now in their 60s, the Thakkers — known in the community as “Yogi” and “Jay” — are reliving many of those challenges, with a few new hurdles.

The Thakkers’ dilapidated Subway restaurant on Devine Street in Columbia became an icon of the devastation wrought by the historic 2015 floods, which washed South Carolina in more than \$2 billion worth of damage, The State reported a year after the disaster.

[Read more here...](#)

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*June 27, 2018 - Local - Richland County*

## **New Land Development Manual Aims to Better Protect Water, Road Quality**

"Richland County is seeking input on a new set of guidelines aimed at limiting the negative effects construction projects may have on the surrounding environment.

The "Land Development Manual" establishes minimum standards for engineers, developers, plan reviewers, inspectors, contractors and other parties to abide by during the planning, designing and construction of land development and redevelopment projects in Richland County. The manual specifically targets stormwater issues and puts measures in place to ensure privately built roads meet S.C. Department of Transportation standards.

Residents are asked to review a working draft of the Land Development Manual online at [richlandcountysc.gov/ldm](http://richlandcountysc.gov/ldm) and submit feedback about the draft document by contacting

Engineering Associate and Plan Reviewer Kathleen Hatchell at

[Hatchell.Kathleen@richlandcountysc.gov](mailto:Hatchell.Kathleen@richlandcountysc.gov) or 803-576-2383. The deadline to submit comments is 5 p.m. Friday, July 20

[Read more here...](#)

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*March 7, 2018 - Local - The State*

## **SC Supreme Court halts Richland County penny tax spending, citing misuse**

By [Jeff Wilkinson](#) And [Sarah Ellis](#)

"The state Supreme Court on Wednesday questioned "dubious" spending in Richland County's transportation penny sales tax program and ordered a halt to further spending until the county ensures the money is being spent legally.

The justices directed a circuit court judge to require the county to establish safeguards assuring the money is spent only on transportation-related capital projects and some administrative costs, as required by state law. The circuit court also can order the county to repay any previous improper expenditures.

[Read more here...](#)

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*February 13, 2018 - Top Story - The Free Times*

## **Groundwater: Clemson's Drew Lanham Talks Race and Conservation**

By [Eva Moore](#)

"If you're looking for an introduction to Drew Lanham's emotionally bare but razor-sharp brand of nature philosophy, a two-minute YouTube video called 'Rules for the Black Birdwatcher' is a good place to start.

'You know, there are essential tools for birding,' the Clemson University distinguished professor of wildlife biology tells the camera. 'There are your binoculars, your spotting scope, your field guide. And, if you're black, you're going to need probably two or three forms of ID.'"

[Read more here...](#)

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*January 25, 2018 - Politics & Government - The State*

## **SC legislators question dam-safety rules that regulators say could save lives**

By [Sammy Fretwell](#)

"One of the worst dam-safety programs in the country has made major improvements since a devastating 2015 flood that collapsed 51 state-regulated dams – but challenges still lie ahead, state regulators told lawmakers Thursday.

'The dam program is at a higher level than it has been in the past as far as being able to address the safety of regulated dams in the state,' said David Wilson, acting director of the S.C. Department of Health and Environmental Control. 'We have new tools in place. We've got a better knowledge base, and we're working directly with dam owners.'"

[Read more here...](#)

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*November 09, 2017 - Opinion Extra - The State*

## **How did THAT get in the creek? And what are you going to do about it?**

*By Erich Miarka And Special to The State's editorial board*

"Our community suffers from a major, unsightly problem: litter. It's everywhere you look: on the street, in parking lots, in the ditches, even in our neighborhoods.

All of this trash ends up somewhere, and for a large portion of Richland County, that somewhere is Gills Creek."

[Read more here...](#)

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*September 02, 2017 - Politics & Government - The State*

## **2 years after flood washed away their road, Columbia residents still isolated**

*By Cassie Cope*

"As floodwaters ravage Houston, Columbia area residents can offer this reality: Recovering from a natural disaster takes time. Sometimes, years.

In October 2015, about 15 homes in Arcadia Lakes lost access to nearby Trenholm Road when floodwater washed away the Cary Lake dam and the road atop it.

Nearly two years later, those residents still face an empty lake and use a makeshift road – it once was a neighbor's driveway – to get to their homes."

[Read more here...](#)

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*December 25, 2016 - Local - The State*

## **Concrete dam proposed at Cary Lake as property owners seek to restore once-scenic pond**

*By Sammy Fretwell*

"COLUMBIA, SC - Homeowners at Cary Lake plan to build a concrete dam to replace the earthen structure that crumbled after a massive 2015 storm sent millions of gallons of water cascading through the Gills Creek watershed in east Columbia.

The project, estimated to cost about \$1.5 million, is awaiting approval from the S.C. Department of Health and Environmental Control, which has received plans and is considering the homeowners' application to rebuild.

The Cary Lake dam is one of three in the Arcadia Lakes community to be reconstructed."

[Read more here...](#)

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*Wednesday, December 7, 2016 - Free Times*

## **Flood Fight: Owner of Damaged Devine Street Building Sues Neighbor**

*[By Andy Shain](#)*

"The owner of the damaged building most identified with Columbia's historic 2015 flood is suing the owner of an adjacent shopping center in a dispute over road access that has halted potential redevelopment of the site next to Gills Creek.

The blue-roofed building on Devine Street that housed an auto title loan and tax preparation businesses stands ravaged more than a year after the creek swelled to nearly 20 feet in the once-in-a-1,000-year storm. More than 30,000 motorists pass by the dilapidated building each day."

[Read more...](#)

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*December 5, 2016 - American Rivers*

## **Bioretention with Benefits**

*[By Gerrit Jöbsis](#)*

### **Owens Field Park, in Richland County, South Carolina, just got a make over. Learn how the bioretention is helping control the parks stormwater.**

"Last year Gills Creek, which flows through the heart of Columbia, SC, was the epicenter of a 1000 year rain event and flood disaster like never seen before on Gills Creek. Five dams failed, hundreds of homes and businesses were destroyed, and tragically several people lost their lives. Owens Field Park, an old airport runway, is one of the busiest parks in Columbia. Thousands gather to play soccer, baseball, run the trails, or play on the disc golf course. It is now becoming a success story for controlling runoff and stormwater pollution."

[Read more...](#)

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*Tuesday, November 15, 2016 - Richland County*

## **Creek Restoration Project in Northeast Richland County Wins Engineering Award**

"Little Jackson Creek in Northeast Richland County is getting a much-needed makeover to help control flooding, improve water quality and better protect its surrounding natural habitat. From its headwaters in the Spring Valley subdivision to its confluence with Jackson Creek near Dentsville, Little Jackson Creek flows for nearly five miles. Over the past few decades, sections of the meandering waterway have transformed into deep ditches, leading to severe erosion and an impaired aquatic habitat. These detrimental changes are a result of the watershed's highly impervious, pre-regulation development and urban stormwater runoff, as well as damage from

the October 2015 flood.

Today, more than 1,500 feet of the creek and nearly nine acres of surrounding wetlands have been successfully restored."

[Read more here...](#)

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*October 26, 2016 - Politics & Government - The State*

## **SC panel OKs 2 proposals to toughen dam-safety law**

By [Avery G. Wilks](#)

"COLUMBIA, SC - Nearly three weeks after Hurricane Matthew broke 25 more S.C. dams, an S.C. House panel agreed Wednesday on legislation that would tighten the state's dam-safety law. The panel will suggest that S.C. House Speaker Jay Lucas, R-Darlington, file a bill in December to give state regulators oversight over more dams and, also, require dam owners to register with the S.C. Department of Health and Environmental Control"

[Read more here...](#)

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*October 20, 2016 - South Carolina Public Radio*

## **Greenville County Lets The Floodplains Flood**

By *Alexandra Olgin*

"Buying out homes isn't a new idea. The Federal Emergency Management Agency has been doing it for a while. The agency said a few other localities in the Southeast have similar programs to Greenville. What makes Greenville County's program unique, is the proactive buy outs funded with local storm water monies."

[Read and listen here...](#)

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*September 30, 2016 - Local - The State*

## **Pilot flood-control program in Shandon has limited success**

By [Clif LeBlanc](#)

"COLUMBIA, SC - The cost and trouble of an innovative, nearly \$1 million flood-control effort on a couple of blocks in some of the most flood-prone parts of Shandon has fallen short of expectations.

'The Shandon project has come in a lot higher than we expected,' assistant city manager Missy Gentry recently told City Council. Initial costs forced the city to slash the size of the project by two-thirds, said a city engineer who oversaw the project."

[Read more here...](#)

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*September 28, 2016 - Cover Story - Free Times*

## **Rain Out: How the October Flood Changed Columbia**

*By Free Times*

"As the first anniversary approaches, state and Columbia-area officials warn the region could get flooded again given recent climate changes and damage from the storm last year.

After several days of rain, a storm drenched the Midlands with more than a foot of water on Oct. 4 — bursting dozens of dams, closing hundreds of roads and bridges, and displacing enough people to fill Colonial Life Arena. Nine people died in Richland County, all from drowning when driving through roads flooded in what's been called a 1,000-year storm."

[Read more...](#)

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*September 9, 2016 - Local - The State*

## **With a reintroduction, can Gills Creek and Columbia come to good terms?**

*By Sarah Ellis*

"What is Gills Creek, this stream that bubbles up from beneath Hughes Pond among extravagant WildeWood homes?

It is the creek we took for granted, forgot, until our abrupt, violent reintroduction in the floods of last October.

Some of the cleanest water in the watershed is here; it hasn't had a chance to be polluted yet.

Upstream development and runoff will eventually sully the water quality, but not here."

[Read more here...](#)

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*July 07, 2016 - ColaDaily.com*

## **Community organizations call for 'citizen scientists' to keep waterways clean, safe**

*By Karla Turner*

"There is a new plan to empower Columbia residents to do something about the health and safety of their waterways.

Rocky Branch Watershed Alliance, Smith Branch Watershed Alliance, City of Columbia Stormwater Management, Richland County Stormwater Management and Clemson Extension have received training in the Georgia Adopt-A-Stream stewardship program."

[Read more...](#)

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*June 26, 2016 - Opinion Extra - The State*

## **To cut flood risk, tackle stormwater problem**

**October dam failures were a symptom of much larger problem: bad land development and corresponding stormwater runoff**

## **Overbuilding means Gills Creek, tributaries no longer function like a natural stream during high flows and floods**

### **Stormwater utility fee & fee credits encourage developers and property owners to reduce their impervious surfaces and runoff**

*By Erich Miarka, Guest Columnist*

The October floods were an eye-opening event that cost lives and billions of dollars in damage. This may have been a 1,000-year storm event, but that does not mean we will never see anything like it again. It is imperative that we find a comprehensive solution to myriad problems surrounding Gills Creek Watershed, with flooding certainly at the forefront.

This is a challenge that individuals and even neighborhoods cannot address on their own; it requires a mutual, shared responsibility across the watershed.

[Read more...](#)

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*June 20, 2016 - South Carolina Public Radio*

## **Smart, Post-Flood Rebuilding Should Limit Rebuilding**

*By [Thelisha Eaddy](#)*

During the Flood, Gills Creek Watershed Association (GCWA) Program Director Erich Miarka was driving around looking to see where he could help.

“I just drove in circles for three days, trying to see what had failed, what hadn’t failed, what was on the verge of failing.” Miarka said he posted information about what he saw on the Association’s Facebook page. “I was trying to get out there and see as much of the watershed as possible.”

“A lot of other communities, use their river or stream corridors in the floodplains as paths of recreation that could be something like a greenway; like a walking and biking trail.” Miarka said the Little Sugar Creek in Charlotte, NC had a lot of similar issues that Gills Creek is currently dealing with.

[Read and listen to more...](#)

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*June 19, 2016 - Local - The State*

## **Four Richland County neighborhoods weigh new tax for dam repairs**

### **Voters go to the polls Tuesday in the Midlands’ first referendum to repair broken dams**

**A ‘yes’ vote could add up to \$3,500 to annual property tax bills, possibly for 30 years**

## **Voters in each area must agree to proposal; only those neighborhoods would be taxed**

By [Tim Flach](#)

RICHLAND COUNTY, SC - Four small neighborhoods are in the forefront of developing a way to repair some of the 45 Richland County dams destroyed or severely damaged by floods from record rain in October.

Homeowners in each of the Northeast Richland neighborhoods will go to the polls in the next two months to decide whether to tax themselves extra – possibly for as long as three decades – to replace dams that either broke or need strengthening.

In three of the four areas, houses now ring an empty lake bed. A “yes” vote would restore the dams and bring back water. Beaver Lake’s dam, which still holds back water, would be strengthened.

[Read more...](#)

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*May 30, 2016 - Local - The State*

## **Riverkeeper checks for pollution when state regulators don’t**

### **Environmental group pays for water monitoring in places where state agency doesn’t check**

### **DHEC monitoring program sustained years of cuts**

### **Congaree Riverkeeper finds elevated bacteria levels in some creeks**

By [Sammy Fretwell](#)

COLUMBIA, SC - Bacteria levels high enough to make people sick showed up in recent water samples at Rocky Branch, an urban stream that empties into the Congaree River.

It was the latest in a series of test results indicating that Rocky Branch is polluting the big river where people swim, fish and wade. But no one would know about the pollution if they depended on the S.C. Department of Health and Environmental Control. DHEC doesn’t test the creek near the Congaree.

Instead, the job has largely fallen on the Congaree Riverkeeper group, a non-profit environmental organization. The group spends at least \$5,000 a year checking rivers and creeks like Rocky Branch in an attempt to keep the public informed about water quality.

[Read more...](#)

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*April 1, 2016 - Local - The State*

## **Development boom in Columbia area contributed to dam failures, researchers say**

**Dams at Covington Lake, Old Mill Pond slammed by upstream runoff, researchers say**  
**Explosion in growth blamed for increasing water flow that weakened dams**  
**Stronger dams advocated in increasingly urbanized areas**

By SAMMY FRETWELL [sfretwell@thestate.com](mailto:sfretwell@thestate.com)

"Booming growth and development in parts of the Columbia area likely contributed to the failure of dams during last fall's devastating floods, researchers at the College of Charleston have concluded.

Instead of soaking into the ground, rain that fell during last October's massive storm ran off pavement in areas that have grown dramatically since 2001 – and that increased the force of water working its way toward dams downstream, according to research presented Friday during a conference in Columbia.

[Read more...](#)

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*March 28, 2016 - Local - The State*

**Demands begin in Columbia, Richland County for flood buyouts**

**More than 70 property owners in city, Richland County interested**  
**Number expected to rise**  
**Buyouts seen as preferable to paying for expensive repairs**

By Avery G. Wilks [awilks@thestate.com](mailto:awilks@thestate.com)

"COLUMBIA, SC - More than 70 property owners in Richland County have told officials they are interested in selling their properties to transform them into green space.

And that number is likely to rise as more residents respond to letters from Columbia and Richland County asking about their interest in a buyout.

[Read more...](#)

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*March 5, 2016 - The Buzz - The State*

**Unclear when broken SC roads over dams will be fixed**

**Roads atop broken dams still out five months after flooding**  
**Private dam owners grappling with how to pay for repairs**  
**More than 14,000 Richland drivers must take detours around roads**

By Cassie Cope [ccope@thestate.com](mailto:ccope@thestate.com)

"COLUMBIA, SC - Business at Steve Peter's gas station on Wilson Boulevard has dropped 90 percent since the road atop Lake Elizabeth Dam was washed out during the historic flood in October.

The flooding washed out hundreds of roads across South Carolina, the majority of which have

been reopened.

But it is unknown when 23 S.C. roads, including 11 in Richland County, over failed privately owned dams will reopen. More than 14,000 drivers in Richland County have to find new routes because of broken roads over failed dams.

Dam owners, in many cases homeowners associations, are grappling with how to raise money to make repairs. None of the failed dams regulated by the S.C. Department of Health and Environmental Control have submitted repair permit applications, according to the agency. Meanwhile, the S.C. Department of Transportation says repairing the dams is not the roads agency's responsibility."

[Read more...](#)

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*March 4, 2016 - South Carolina Public Radio*

## **More Than 200 Comments Help Shape the Path Of Gills Creek Greenway**

*By Thelisha Eaddy*

The Gills Creek area in Columbia received over 20 inches of rain during the historic October 2015 flood. As residents continue the cleanup and re-building process, many are also battling another item of concern.

Three weeks ago, residents shared their thoughts during a public meeting about a proposed greenway to be built in the area. The greenway would consist of four miles of concrete sidewalk with bridges, boardwalks and supporting facilities. The project would run between Kilbourne and Bluff roads in Richland County.

[Read more...](#)

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*February 11, 2016 - Local - The State*

## **Gills Creek neighbors have mixed reactions to proposed greenway**

**Hundreds attended public input meeting where first draft of project was presented**

**A number of people said they have concerns about the security of their homes with a public greenway close by**

By Sarah Ellis [sellis@thestate.com](mailto:sellis@thestate.com)

"Hundreds of neighbors of Gills Creek attended a meeting to give their input on a proposed greenway that could stretch from the southern tip of Lake Katherine to Bluff Road. It stands to affect hundreds of residents whose homes suffered badly four months ago when floodwaters gushed from Gills Creek, particularly in the neighborhoods near Lake Katherine, behind Woodland Park off Garners Ferry Road and off South Beltline Boulevard."

[Read more...](#)

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*November 21, 2015 - Local - The State*

## **The team effort that saved a Columbia dam**

**Beaver Dam Lake dam needed hundreds of sandbags and tons of rock to keep from failing in October**

**State officials, contractors worked with residents to develop solutions to hold back water during massive flood**

**Efforts likely prevented a second punch to weakened dams downstream in populated areas**

By [Andrew Shain](#)

"As rain poured and waters in Beaver Dam Lake rose on Oct. 4, Jim Lehman climbed into his orange kayak to clear pine straw clogging an opening that allows water to escape the dam. Lehman's efforts were futile during a storm that dumped three months of rain on the Columbia area in a single day. It was a sign of the difficulties to come for Lehman and his neighbors, who would spend the next four days struggling to keep the 24-foot dam in the WildeWood subdivision from bursting."

[Read more here...](#)

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*November 19, 2015 - Local - The State*

## **Gills Creek the focus of contaminated fish study**

**EPA grants money for mercury study in Gills Creek**

**Polluted fish, subsistence fishermen targeted**

By [SAMMY FRETWELL](#)

"COLUMBIA, SC - The federal government will provide \$30,000 to study the presence of mercury in fish that inhabit lower Gills Creek and to make residents in minority communities aware of the dangers the toxin presents."

[Read more here...](#)

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*November 18, 2015 - EPA News Releases from Region 4*

## **The Gills Creek Watershed Association of Columbia, SC awarded \$30,000 Environmental Justice Small Grant**

"ATLANTA – An Environmental Justice Small Grant from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has been awarded to the Gills Creek Watershed Association. for their project titled: Exposure to mercury through subsistence fishing: Assessment and outreach in underserved communities in Gills Creek Watershed, SC. The Gills Creek Watershed Association is one of 40

non-profit and tribal organizations selected for award of nearly \$1.2 million in competitive grants for work to address environmental justice (EJ) issues nationwide. "

[Read more here...](#)

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*November 8, 2015 - Opinion Extra - The State*

## **Marcil: Gills Creek Watershed needs long-term governance**

**Healthy watershed allows stormwater to soak in rather than becoming concentrated run-off**

**More than 30 percent of the Gills Creek watershed is developed, with much of the floodplain and even floodway built upon**

**Public investment makes sense, given public benefits of well-managed watershed**

*By Valerie Marcil*

"Columbia, SC - As individuals, members of the Gills Creek Watershed Association ache for those whose lives and property have been upended by the unprecedented flood event. We especially mourn for the lost lives. And we extend our thanks and gratitude for the local, state and federal responders, as well as the jon-boat navy and other volunteers who worked tirelessly to help those in distress and to begin to return order to our community."

[Read more here...](#)

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*October 31, 2015 - The State*

## **Better coordination sought after dams break in SC flood**

**Talk starts about forming special district to oversee Gills Creek dams**

**District could provide organization for series of lakes**

**Residents could be taxed for dam maintenance**

*By [SAMMY FRETWELL](#) and [ANDREW SHAIN](#)*

"COLUMBIA, SC - Days before a historic storm flooded the Gills Creek watershed, state regulators urged people who oversee dozens of community ponds to drain water so that heavy rains wouldn't cause dams to break.

Property owners throughout the watershed are discussing whether to form a watershed management district, a quasi-governmental agency that would oversee dams and lakes to make sure they are managed as a unit, rather than individually as they are now. The watershed has about 100 lakes within an approximately 20-mile area, consultants say."

[Read more here...](#)

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*October 28, 2015 - The State*

## **FEMA money unlikely to rebuild private dams, Heigel says**

## **FEMA doesn't fund private dam repair DHEC forced to lower some ponds Management of Gills Creek dams 'somewhat disorganized'**

By [SAMMY FRETWELL](#)

Prospects are dim that the Federal Emergency Management Agency will pay to fix private dams that crumbled during a devastating storm in South Carolina earlier this month, the state's environmental protection agency chief said Wednesday.

Catherine Heigel, who heads the S.C. Department of Health and Environmental Control, said FEMA might pay to restore public roads across dams, but not to repair or replace the dams themselves.

FEMA's position is that "the dam is the private property owners' responsibility to be rebuilt," Heigel said during a Senate hearing in Columbia. "Then once that's done, they'll pay for the road repair."

[Read more here...](#)

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*October 26, 2015 - Associated Press*

## **Homeowners across South Carolina face big bills to fix dams following historic flood**

By *SEANNA ADCOX, Associated Press*

"COLUMBIA, S.C. (AP) — Across the state, 75 dams are under emergency repair orders — 28 of them in hard-hit Richland County, where floodwaters busted through or spilled over a series of earthen dams built decades ago along Gills Creek, which runs through the capital city area of Columbia. An engineer's detailed inspection, as well as repair or replacement plans, must be submitted by month's end to the state environmental agency [DHEC].

If owners don't comply with those orders, the agency "will hire a contractor to go in and take necessary action to protect public safety" and send the owners a bill, agency head Catherine Heigel told The Associated Press. That's in addition to a \$1,000 fine. Owners could also face penalties of up to \$500 daily.

Erich Miarka, the Gills Creek Watershed Association coordinator, said homeowner groups want to comply with the agency, but the orders caused confusion."

[Read more...](#)