

Lake Watch turns 25

Celebrating the success of water quality programs and more

Lake Watch of Lake Martin was one of the first citizen groups to get trained and certified in a Water Chemistry Workshop back in 1993 by the then newly-established Alabama Water Watch (AWW) Program. Lake Watch founder and then-President, Dick Bronson, saw great value in citizen volunteer monitors collecting water quality data using the EPA-approved protocols of AWW.

Lake Watch established a network of sites across Lake Martin to monitor several water chemistry variables (air and water temperature, dissolved oxygen, pH, alkalinity, hardness, turbidity and Secchi disk visibility) on a monthly basis, to not only check for any current water quality problems but also to be able to look at long-term water quality trends through time.

In the early years, Lake Watchers hit the ground running, getting trained and certified as AWW water monitors. After establishing sample sites, they began monitoring in 1993 throughout Lake Martin, with sites stretching from Horseshoe Bend to Kowaliga Bridge (see 1993 map from *Citizen Volunteer Water Quality Monitoring of Alabama's Reservoirs – Lake Martin* published by AWW in February, 2000; available at www.alabamawaterwatch.org/resources/publications).

Early Lake Watchers, including Dick and Mary Ann Bronson, David and Diana French, Stan and Virginia Pietrzyskowski, Bill and Linda Stewart, BJ and Bill Niedermeier and Ricky and Terri Brand, got the group off to a strong start, building a solid foundation of science-based water data from which many other watershed-stewardship efforts grew.

This commitment to water monitoring continues, with sites expanding from the initial nine to a total of 49 sites, 19 of which are being actively monitored (sites labeled with green markers on map above).

Thanks to the volunteer service and dedication of dozens of Lake Watch monitors, members and supporters over the past 25 years, much has been accomplished. Lake Watch efforts and accomplishments include:

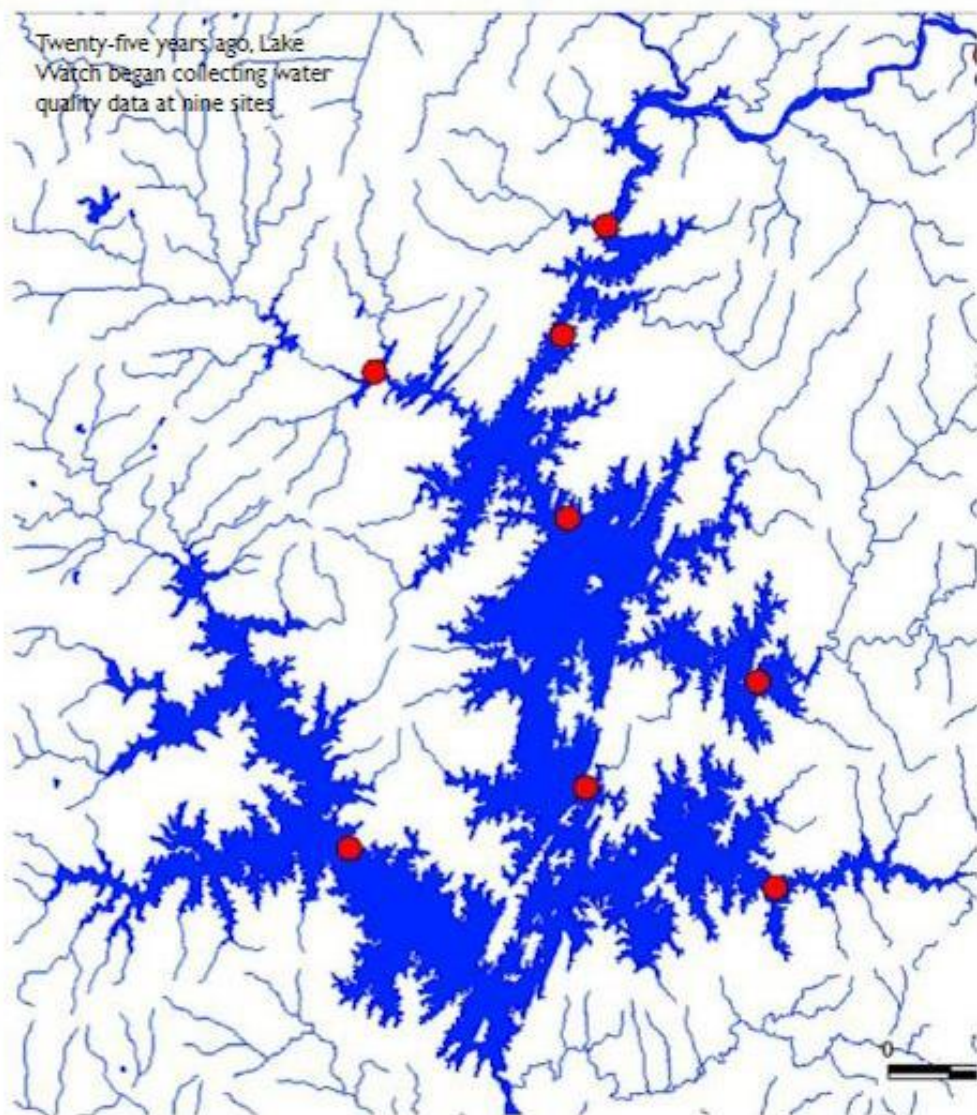
- After joining the AWW pro-

gram in 1993, 67 Lake Watchers have been trained and certified as AWW water monitors, and they have monitored at one or more sites on the lake or in the Lake Martin Watershed;

■ Four Lake Watchers have been trained as AWW trainers – Judy Palfrey, Dick Bronson, Ann Campbell and me – and conducted dozens of workshops, training scores of AWW citizen monitors in and beyond the Lake Martin Watershed;

■ Lake Watch has established a network of water quality monitoring sites from the lake's headwater streams, through the lake, down to Martin Dam, as shown on the 2016 map;

■ Lake Watchers have worked at the local and state levels to advocate for and help mitigate point source and nonpoint source pollution problems in Lake Martin and



have actively participated in supporting and developing local and state policies to protect Lake Martin, as well as other public waters in Alabama;

■ Lake Watch has partnered with Auburn University scientists in the drafting of several proposals to Alabama Power Company, USDA-CSREES and World Wildlife Fund to conduct research and outreach throughout the Tallapoosa River Basin;

■ Lake Watchers have conducted many different environmental education programs, one of which (Dick and Mary Ann Bronson established and named 'Living Streams') has been taught annually to hundreds of school children, Scouts and teachers at Camp ASCCA over the past two decades, instilling an environmental ethic in thousands of our youth, which led to the foundation of AWW's AMSTI-endorsed *Exploring Our Living Streams* environmental education curriculum;

■ Lake Watchers have participated in countless Federal Regulatory Energy Commission relicensing meetings over a period of several years, advocating for environmentally sound management of Lake Martin and the Tallapoosa River over the coming decades; in partnership with Lake



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Martin Home Owners and Boat Owners (HOBO), LMRA and others, this work resulted in a new management plan that promises more water for lake residents and lake users;

■ Lake Watchers have advocated for and defended water rights in interstate disputes known as the Water Wars, helping to ensure that water quality and water quantity in the Tallapoosa River Basin are preserved;

■ And, the *crème de la crème*, in December 2010, after a lengthy personal crusade for special recognition and protections for Lake Martin by Lake Watch founder Dick Bronson, Lake Watch witnessed the fruits of those labors when then-Gov. Bob Riley signed Executive

Order 52, establishing the *Treasured Alabama Lake* (TAL), an official designation for lakes in Alabama, followed by the Alabama Department of Environmental Management designation of Lake Martin as the first TAL. This new designation affords Lake Martin and other future TAL lakes such recognition and protection for generations to come. For this achievement, and leadership in many of the Lake Watch achievements over the past two-plus decades, Dick and Mary Ann were awarded the Alabama Water Watch Lifetime Achievement Award earlier this year.

An exciting new effort on the lake is establishing key Lake Watch sites in the Swim Guide (see www.theswimguide.org). The first Lake Martin site added to this online swimming water guide was Wind Creek State Park beach, and we are working on adding others soon. By doing so, we make our Lake Watch water quality monitoring data much more readily available to the public and help to advertise these excellent facilities to a national audience, as well as help protect the public's health.

Lake Watch extends a special 'Thank you' to Lake Martin HOBO for their generous support of Lake Watch water monitoring efforts.

If you haven't done so, we invite you to join us in our efforts to preserve and protect our Treasured Lake – for all of us and for the children to come. Check us out at www.lakewatch.org, or contact me at 334-844-4785 and join us in watching the water.

Eric Reutebuch is president of Lake Watch Lake Martin, a non-profit organization dedicated to preserving and improving the water quality of Lake Martin and surrounding waters. To learn more about Lake Watch, visit the website www.lakewatch.org.

