

# Lake Watch

of Lake Martin

Newsletter No. 11  
20 December 1995

Dick Bronson, President  
(205) 825-9353

• I'm way past due getting this newsletter out and scheduling a Lake Watch meeting, but my excuse isn't bad. I had a bout with a ruptured appendix this summer, and at my age, you just don't bounce back quickly! Anyway, here goes.

• **REMEMBRANCE.** We were saddened by the death of Lake Watch member and friend Joe Ferguson. Although he often was unable to attend our meetings because of his wife's illness, Joe kept in touch with a call or short note. I received a card and membership check from him two days before his death with this note of encouragement to Lake Watchers: *"Thank you for caring about our beautiful lake."* Joe was a unique individual who genuinely cared about issues and his community.

• **LAKE WATCH MEETING.** The next general membership meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, 16 January 1996 at 6:00 PM in the CACC Library Auditorium. Our program will include a special guest speaker: **Charles Horn**, Chief of the Water Division, ADEM, who will speak on two topics.

1) **ADDITIONAL WATER QUALITY MONITORING PROJECTS.** Mr Horn will discuss several ways that Lake Watch might augment our Alabama Water Watch testing program. Some types of monitoring we should be thinking about include:

- Swimming areas for fecal coliform contamination.
- Drinking water sources for bacteriological contamination.
- Land use problems such as improper clear cutting and construction site runoff.
- Non-native aquatic organisms such as the zebra mussel.
- Improper pesticide and herbicide use.

2) **SUGAR CREEK.** Mr Horn will provide a status report and answer questions.

• **SUGAR CREEK UPDATE.** CH2M HILL, on behalf of the City of Alexander City, recently completed an Engineering Report in response to ADEM's Administrative Order of August 1994. The report addresses the chronic toxicity problem consistently present in the discharge into Lake Martin from the Sugar Creek Wastewater Treatment Plant, and discusses how Chloride, Copper and an unidentified organic substance may be contributing to the toxicity. The report evaluates four alternatives for dealing with the problem, and concludes that "the best approach to dealing with chronic toxicity is to implement an industrial pretreatment program."

> We are in strong agreement with pretreatment as the best solution, and we hope local industries work on it with all due haste. With this in mind, it appears time to

reflect a bit about what has happened with the Sugar Creek issue since Charles Horn first spoke to our newly formed organization nearly four years ago. Mr Horn had personally observed the sewage sludge accumulation in the Sugar Creek section of Lake Martin, and during the Lake Watch meeting in February 1992, he stated that the contamination was a direct result of improper operation of the city's sewage treatment plant. ADEM subsequently issued the first of two Administrative Orders that directed specific actions to correct problems with the plant. What followed was a series of expensive studies and tests and investigations.....and some progress.

> There have been some **positive results** over the past four years. The Sugar Creek plant discharge no longer contains extremely high fecal coliform content (probably a result of the color removal process). The suspended solids that contributed so much to the sewage sludge accumulation in the Sugar Creek embayment are under control. And the treatment plant is undergoing a major upgrade to improve its ability to properly treat waste water being discharged into the lake.

> However, a closer inspection reveals some disturbing similarities to four years ago. The lake bottom still contains a huge amount of **sewage sludge** that poses a potential public health threat to water contact activities, and there are no **warning signs** to inform unsuspecting citizens of this threat. The plant discharge into the lake still fails permit standards for **chronic toxicity**. The **dye color problem** still has not been solved, and the embayment retains its characteristic burgundy colored stain. And heavy nutrient loading still causes the Sugar Creek and Elkahatchee basins to experience severe nuisance **algal blooms** in the spring and summer.

> There is another disturbing aspect of the Sugar Creek issue that still lies ahead. In an effort to remove more dye color from the plant discharge, the city and local industries recently announced plans to substantially increase the **chlorination** process. This has raised concerns among knowledgeable scientists and ADEM officials that an increase in the use of chlorine could result in **carcinogenic by-products**. *This is a major concern that must be quickly addressed.*

> Clearly, a great deal of time and effort has been expended to correct harmful discharges into Lake Martin. The city is on the right track because of close scrutiny from ADEM and the Attorney General's Office. However, it is equally clear that much more remains to be done, and it is essential that ADEM now lay out a **time table** for the completion of **industrial pretreatment** and **color removal** projects. We have requested that ADEM issue a third Administrative Order to Alexander City with specific deadlines for final completion of Sugar Creek corrective actions.

- **SUCCESS STORY**. Recently, Lake Watch member Dan Ryan showed how the system for addressing environmental violations is supposed to work. He and several Stillwaters neighbors observed sewage water being discharged into the lake by

contractor personnel. Direct action by one individual stopped the immediate problem, and follow-up calls to local and state officials resulted in a meeting with affected landowners, the contractor, and officials from the resort and ADEM. During the meeting, an agreement was reached concerning responsibility for the discharge and an assurance that the problem would not happen again.....the issue was defused on the spot. This was a classic demonstration of how citizens took decisive action to correct an environmental problem to everyone's satisfaction. Great job, Dan!

- **RE-CERTIFICATION WORKSHOP.** Our Lake Watch volunteer monitors were re-certified on 26 October by the Water Watch folks from Auburn University. The monthly lake monitoring program continues to go well under the leadership of Virginia & Stan Pietrzykowski. We are into our third year of testing more than five permanent sites on Lake Martin, and we plan to have Dr Bill Deutsch at our meeting on 16 January to discuss the results and show water quality comparisons with other state waters.

- **AUBURN WATER ISSUES COURSE.** Dr Bill Deutsch will offer the second "Water Issues in Alabama" course at the Auburn University Fisheries Department on Mondays, February 12, 19 & 26 (6-8 PM) and Saturday, March 2 (10 AM-2 PM). This a great course, and attendees are certified as Alabama Water Watch monitors.

- **ALABAMA STATE RIVERS COALITION CONFERENCE.** The ASRC conference was held at Camp ASCCA, Lake Martin on 17-19 November with over 60 attendees from environmental organizations in Alabama, several other states, and 6 foreign countries. The agenda was crammed full of great speakers, beginning with keynoter Lieutenant Governor Don Siegelman, and followed by Don Elder (Alabama Nature Conservancy), Dr Harvey Jackson (author of 'Rivers of History'), and Dr Charles Lydeard (University of Alabama). Later in the weekend, Dr Bill Deutsch showed up with six international friends who work on water quality problems in their respective countries and who face much more severe water degradation issues than any we ever experience. Several Lake Watch members enjoyed this most rewarding weekend, and we hope to have more members attend the conference next year.

- **THANKS!!!** Many thanks to all who renewed Lake Watch memberships this year, and a special thanks for those **additional contributions**. We now have sufficient funds to purchase more sophisticated equipment for expanded water testing.

{For that last minute income tax deduction, remember we are a 501(c)(3) organization.}

- **HOLIDAY WISHES.** From our house to your house, we wish you a happy and safe holiday and our hope for a healthy and rewarding 1996. God Bless!

*Dick & Mary Ann  
Brouson*

SEE YOU Tues 16 JANUARY 1996 at 6:00 PM, CACC.

# Lake Watch

of Lake Martin

Newsletter No. 12  
17 April 1996

Dick Bronson, President  
(205) 825-9353

• The first order of business in this newsletter is to announce a change to the Lake Watch meeting scheduled for 23 April. The meeting is **POSTPONED** until late May in order to schedule a guest speaker from State Health. (see item below).

• **ROSS PAYTON**, 1921-1996: Lake Watch lost one of its most loyal members. Ross was with us from the beginning when he played a major role in preventing the opening of another landfill alongside the lake. Many will remember his impassioned comments at meetings about the necessity to take a tough stance to protect our lake, and he was proven right. Although Ross was unable to attend meetings since he suffered a stroke, he was there in spirit.

• **CHLORINE AND DIOXIN**. Those who attended our meeting last January will recall a rather heated discussion about local public health concerns related to **toxic chemicals** in our environment. Those concerns arise, in part, from three recent publications that describe how toxic chemicals may be causing some important national health problems. These publications are as follows: an *EPA reassessment of dioxin*; a book "*Dying from Dioxin*" by Lois Gibbs; and a book "*Our Stolen Future*" by Myers, Colborn and Dumanoski.

- The EPA report and Gibbs' book make a linkage between cancer and public exposure to the various forms of **dioxin** which are unintended byproducts of industrial processes that involve **chlorine**, or processes that burn chlorine and organic matter. **>These publications discuss the growing scientific evidence that, in general, the more chlorine present, the more dioxin is formed.**

- These publications also provide a long list of potential sources of dioxin, many of which are found in our community. They include: **> medical waste incineration; industrial wood chip incineration; accumulations of sewage sludge; land application of sewage sludge; smoke stacks from smelter-type industries; and chlorinated textile dyes.**

- When the above points about chlorine and dioxin are coupled with the following local issues, it becomes more evident why citizens might have public health concerns.

- The use of chlorine to remove dye coloration from the Sugar Creek Wastewater Treatment Plant discharge has increased considerably in the past few years.
- The city's drinking water has consistently exceeded prescribed maximum levels of chemical compounds.
- State Health records reflect a high cancer rate in the local area.

- In an effort to learn more about possible local implications from the above points, the State Health Officer has been asked to provide an **informational presentation to Lake Watch about potential public health risks associated with dioxin. This presentation will be conducted at the next Lake Watch meeting in late May as a public service. As soon as speaker arrangements have been completed, we will notify you.**

• **SUGAR CREEK UPDATE**. ADEM recently completed a Consent Order with Alexander City concerning the Sugar Creek Wastewater Treatment Plant and its continued failure to pass chronic toxicity tests since its permit was issued in September 1992. The Consent Order establishes specific requirements which the plant must meet within specific dates. **> No later than 28 June 1996**, the City must submit to ADEM an engineering report with a compliance plan to achieve appropriate chronic toxicity levels. **> No later than 28 December 1997**, the City must comply with the chronic toxicity limits of its permit. The Consent Order includes stipulated penalties for failure to meet these milestone dates. Lake Watch will continue to monitor progress.

• **VOLUNTEER MONITOR TRAINING.** Lake Watch members currently conduct monthly water quality testing on Lake Martin at six permanent test sites, and periodic testing at another four sites. Our testing program, under the expert guidance of Stan & Virginia Pietrzykowski, is recognized as one of the best in the state. Results of three years of our test data compiled by the Water Watch folks at Auburn University indicate a very clean and stable lake.

- Both ADEM and EPA have acknowledged that volunteer monitors provide reliable data that is extremely valuable, particularly in these times of limited resources. In an effort to take an even more detailed look at Lake Martin, we will begin systematic testing of **major streams** that feed into the lake, while continuing our current testing program of permanent sites.

- To accomplish this **expanded testing program**, we need more volunteer monitoring teams. Dr Bill Deutsch and his Water Watch staff will conduct a certification training session this summer on the lake in June. We will certify new volunteer monitors and re-certify those who have taken the training in the past. > We really need more of you to take the training, so please give it some serious thought and call me if you are interested.

• **MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL TIME.** As Lake Watch enters its fifth year, our treasury balance is at \$1800, thanks to you faithful members and some generous donations. It's time to renew your commitment to Lake Watch and a cleaner Lake Martin by sending in a check using the enclosed form. And please pass the word about Lake Watch to your friends and neighbors.....better yet, call me with a name and address, and I'll send them a newsletter and membership form.

-The Lake Watch Board of Directors met in March and discussed some uses for current and future funds. One great idea was to provide **scholarships** to local kids for **Environmental Camps** around the state. We are looking into potential camps, costs, and selection criteria. If anyone has other ideas, please call me.

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>>> See you at the Lake Watch meeting in May (date TBA).  
>>> Guest speaker(s) from State Health.

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# Lake Watch

of Lake Martin

Newsletter No. 13  
23 May 1996

Dick Bronson, President  
(205) 825-9353

This newsletter announces 3 important events for Lake Watch members.

• **LAKE WATCH MEETING.** The next general membership meeting will be held on **Thursday, 13 June 1996 at 6:00-8:00 PM** in the CACC library auditorium. The meeting will focus on the topic "*Public health concerns about chlorine and dioxin in our environment*", and will feature a panel of the following guest speakers:

- **Dr Brian Hughes** (Environmental Toxicologist, Department of Health)
- **Dr J. P. Lofgren** (State Epidemiologist, Department of Health)
- **Mr James McIndoe** (Chief, Water Quality Branch, Water Division, ADEM)
- **Mr Ron Gore** (Chief, Engineering Services Branch, Air Division, ADEM)

We are indeed fortunate to have such a distinguished group of panelists come to Alexander City and participate in a Lake Watch program. Their presentation will be provided as a public service to anyone in the area who is interested in the quality of our environment. >>> All Lake Watch members are strongly encouraged to attend the meeting on 13 June. Please bring your friends and neighbors.

• **VOLUNTEER MONITOR TRAINING SET FOR 6 JUNE.** Our third annual training workshop will be conducted on **Thursday, 6 June 1996 from 9:00 AM to 3:00 PM** at the Elks Lodge in Alexander City. Dr Bill Deutsch and the Water Watch staff from Auburn University will certify new volunteer monitors, and also re-certify those who have taken the training in the past. A portion of the training will concentrate on methods of testing for bacterial contamination using the new RediGel test kit. This specialized training will coincide with a new project sponsored by ADEM wherein volunteer groups such as Lake Watch will conduct detailed bacterial sampling of local swimming spots during the summer months.

As mentioned in the last newsletter, we need a fresh batch of volunteers to help with our expanded lake and stream testing program. This program will involve testing major streams that feed into Lake Martin in order to develop more specific data on water quality of a localized nature. Data from 2 years of testing at our 6 permanent test sites reveals a clean and stable lake. However, these sites, located in the main river run of the lake, may not show the magnitude of non-point source pollution entering the lake via small streams. Our stream testing program will help pinpoint sources of pollution around the lake.

> We have identified 25 people who have either taken the training in the past or have indicated an interest in becoming a volunteer monitor, and we hope most will attend the workshop on 6 June. Lake Watch will provide lunch at the Elks Lodge. If you are interested in taking the training, or simply want to learn more about water quality monitoring, please call me at 825-9353 or (Secretary) Virginia Pietrzykowski at 825-6412 for more information.

• **2nd ANNUAL WATER WATCH MEETING.** The Alabama Water Watch Association will hold its 2nd annual meeting on **Saturday, 15 June 1996** in the **Pharmacy Auditorium at the main Auburn University campus.** The meeting will begin at **9:30 AM** and will include guest speakers, an update on citizen test data, awards, and a Keynote Address by **Senator Ted Little.** The meeting will close with a **free** catfish lunch at the AU Fisheries pond and pavilion in the country. Those Lake Watchers who attended the Auburn meeting last year will agree that it was an enjoyable day.....and the catered catfish lunch was great!

> Since Lake Watch members live so close to Auburn, and since we owe so much to the Water Watch staff for their continued support of our testing program, it would be most fitting that we have maximum attendance from the Lake Martin area. If you plan to attend, please call Alabama Water Watch at their new toll free number **1-888-844-4785**, or call me at 825-9353 or (Secretary) Virginia Pietrzykowski at 825-6412 for reservations and car pool information. > See you in Auburn on Saturday 15 June!

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**RE-CAP**

- **6 June**, Thursday, 9:00 AM: Volunteer monitor training, Elks Lodge
  - **13 June**, Thursday, 6:00 PM: Lake Watch meeting & panel on dioxin, CACC
  - **15 June**, Saturday, 9:30 AM: Water Watch meeting & catfish lunch, Auburn
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# Lake Watch

of Lake Martin

Newsletter No. 14

January 28, 1997

Greetings and best wishes for 1997! The past year was a great one for Lake Watch, and there will be plenty of opportunities this year for continuing our efforts to protect and improve the water quality of Lake Martin.

Dick Bronson, President

## JUNE MEETING

We had a good turnout for the meeting on 13 June to hear three speakers from ADEM deal with the subject of chlorine and dioxin in our environment. We had intended to discuss the public health aspects of chlorine use as well as related regulatory matters; however, a last minute cancellation by speakers from State Toxicology and Epidemiology prevented an in-depth discussion of public health issues, particularly as they apply to our own community. We will reschedule State Health representatives for a Lake Watch presentation soon.



## CHLORINE and DIOXIN

More study has been made into possible connections between local public health problems and local environmental factors. Additional historical data has been obtained from the Alabama Department of Health that lists death rates due to cancer for each Alabama county from the early 1970's to the present. Analysis of this data reveals that **the cancer death rate in Tallapoosa County is consistently higher than in most other counties in the state.** In many cases, the county rate is among the ten highest. Obviously, this is a complex matter that requires much more study by a state agency or possibly as a gradu-

ate study project. We're working on this aspect, and will keep you posted.

Although we have no specific emission data yet, there are several potential sources of dioxin in our community that merit additional attention: *medical waste incineration, wood product and textile waste incineration, accumulation and land application of sewage sludge, emissions from smelter industry smoke stacks, waste water from chlorinated textile dyes, pesticide and herbicide runoff, chlorination to remove dye color from textile waste water, and improper use of chlorine to disinfect drinking water.*

In early January, a dozen Lake Watch members traveled to Auburn University and met with Lois Gibbs, the author of the book "*Dying from Dioxin*". Readers may recall our previous discussions about Gibbs' book and EPA studies that deal with the various forms of dioxin that are unintended byproducts of industrial processes that involve chlorine. More and more national publications point to a growing body of scientific evidence that raises public health concerns about the increased presence of chlorine byproducts in our environment, and suspicions about potential sources of dioxin.

We'll have more to report on this at the next meeting.





VOLUNTEER MONITOR TRAINING

The Water Watch folks from Auburn University conducted their third annual training workshop for Lake Watch volunteers at the Elks Lodge on 6 June 1996. We had 25 monitors certified or recertified. Training was received on both the LaMotte chemical test kit and the Coliscan Easygel bacteriological test kit. Another 8 volunteers were certified or recertified at a training session at the Bronson's house two weeks later. This gives Lake Watch enough trained volunteers to monitor at least 10 sites on the lake, and to conduct periodic bacteriological sampling at selected sites as necessary.

And speaking of training, Dr Bill Deutsch and his Water Watch assistants will conduct a **regional training workshop** for Lake Watch and other area residents at **Auburn University on Saturday, 3 May 1997 from 9:00 AM to 4:00 PM.** During the workshop, we'll recertify all those who have taken the training in the past, and we'll train new volunteers. Training will include the LaMotte chemical test kit, the Coliscan Easygel bacteriological test kit, and possibly some biological stream assessment training. We'll also include training for deep water sampling so we can profile dissolved oxygen levels on Lake Martin as a special Water Watch project.

**> Monitor training: SATURDAY, 3 MAY 1997 at AUBURN UNIVERSITY**

(This workshop is for all volunteer monitors. Please call 825-6412 or 825-9353 for reservations.)

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testing program at Lake Martin. The Bronsons stepped forward to volunteer.....of course, the fact that the event was held at a **dude ranch** in Bandera, Texas may have something to do with their so-called sacrifice. This also provided an opportunity to publicize the Alabama Water Watch program and how environmental groups like Lake Watch have benefited greatly by the partnership between EPA, ADEM, and Auburn University.

We had a great trip, and met a number of people from all around the country who are just as interested and involved in water quality as those in Lake Watch. It was instructive to learn that no other state volunteer monitoring program comes close to the high quality of data obtained by the Alabama Water Watch program. **We truly are #1 in something meaningful!**

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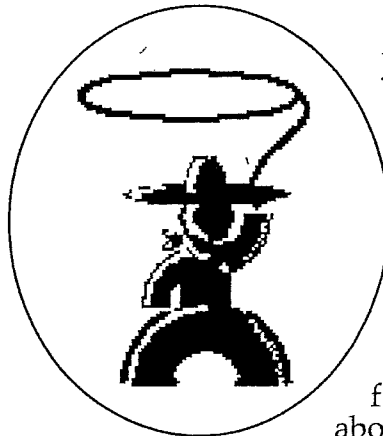
ADEM PROJECTS

In the summer of 1996, we were asked to assist ADEM in monitoring water quality at several sites in the Lake Martin area. As always, Lake Watch members responded in great fashion.

**Terri Brand**, assisted by **Ricky** and their two sons, put a great deal of time and effort in testing for E. coli at the swimming beaches at Wind Creek State Park for 3 months last summer. Using Coliscan Easygel test kits, Terri took more than 45 samples of water, and analyzed them after incubation for 1-3 days. The test results showed virtually no evidence of water quality problems at the Park all summer, and were forwarded to Auburn University and ADEM. **Kudos to the Brands!**

For 4 months last summer, volunteer monitors **Bill & Linda Stewart** and **James Ellzey** drove many miles in remote and rough terrain in the northern end of the county to conduct monthly monitoring at 4 stream sites of interest to ADEM. Again, test results looked normal and were forwarded to Auburn University and ADEM. **Great job Bill, Linda, and James!**

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EPA CONFERENCE

In September, Lake Watch was invited to participate in a four-day EPA conference on "*Non-Point Source Pollution*" for a presentation about the water quality

GRANT

Lake Watch was recently awarded a grant of \$1200 to help expand our water quality efforts in the Tallapoosa River watershed. The grant was based on the following proposal:

*To expand water quality monitoring in the Tallapoosa River watershed by encouraging and assisting the formation of volunteer groups similar to Lake Watch, both upstream and downstream of Lake Martin.*

Our plan is to work closely with the **Alabama Rivers Alliance** to organize citizen groups in the **Lake Harris** (Wedowee) and **Yates Reservoir** (Tallassee) areas who are interested in preserving and improving water quality in the Tallapoosa River. Once we've identified key individuals in the two areas, we'll schedule town meetings and help them get organized. Then we'll begin working on sources of funding to purchase water quality test kits and schedule training workshops by Alabama Water Watch trainers.

*If any Lake Watch members know people in Wedowee or Tallassee and will help in our organizing efforts, please call Dick Bronson at 825-9353.*

We also will use some of the grant money to purchase hi-tech equipment for expanded water testing. Some of the additional test parameters will include **chlorine, nitrates, phosphates, and many of the heavy metals.**

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WATER WARS

The water dispute with our neighboring state is back in the news: It appears that Alabama, Georgia, and Florida have reached tentative agreement on Interstate Compacts that would create Interstate Commissions to address the distribution of water resources in each of the two river basins: the Alabama-Coosa-Tallapoosa (ACT), and the Appalachian-Chattahoochee-Flint (ACF).

A public hearing in December provided stakeholders an opportunity to evaluate the draft compacts and provide input. Lake Watch attended the hearing and submitted comments asking for stronger provisions for continued public input into the water allocation decision process. The final version of the compacts, which will likely be considered by state legislatures this Spring, now includes adequate provisions for continued public input.

The Interstate Compacts have met with generally favorable comments, and most stakeholders believe that the agreements will provide the best method for making critical decisions about future allocations of water resources shared by the 3 states. This is an issue of vital importance to the future health of Lake Martin, and we will continue to closely follow progress.

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SUGAR CREEK

As some of you read in local newspapers last Fall, a federal lawsuit was filed by the Legal Environmental Assistance Foundation (LEAF) against EPA on behalf of Alabama citizens to require that ADEM upgrade state water quality standards for 25 Alabama streams, **including Sugar Creek**. These 25 streams are currently classified either for Agricultural & Industrial, or Industrial Operations use, which is below the minimum standard of Fish & Wildlife use.

Recent information indicates that EPA and ADEM may finally be listening to citizens who have concerns about water quality in Alabama. EPA will conduct a public hearing in Montgomery on 26 February 1997 to hear comments about the proposed reclassifications, and ADEM will hold a similar hearing in March or April. **> There is some indication that Sugar Creek may soon be slated for an upgrade to Fish & Wildlife classification.**

Lake Watch representatives will testify at the hearings. If other members are interested in attending the hearings, please contact Dick Bronson at 825-9353.

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LAKE WATCH MEETING

A general membership meeting will be held on **Tuesday, 25 February 1997 at 6:00 PM**. Due to renovation of the library auditorium, our meeting will be in **Room 201 in the Administration Building** of Central Alabama Community College in Alexander City.

The itenerary includes:

- Guest speaker
- Up-date on Sugar Creek, Water Wars, Dioxin, etc
- A look ahead for Lake Watch
- Plans for Annual Meeting in Spring
- Plans for Election of Officers at Annual Meeting

*>>> LAKE WATCH MEETING <<<*

*>>> Tuesday, 25 February 1997 / 6:00 PM <<<*

*>>> Room 201, CACC Administration Building (George Wallace Bldg) <<<*

**SEE YOU THERE!**

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# Lake Watch

of Lake Martin

Newsletter No. 15  
22 May 1997

Dick Bronson, President

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• **SUGAR CREEK UPGRADE.** As many of you know by now, we were successful in getting Sugar Creek upgraded to "Fish and Wildlife" status. The stream and its embayment in Lake Martin, had for many years been classified by ADEM as "Agricultural and Industrial", despite repeated rejection of that lower classification by EPA.

Getting Sugar Creek upgraded has been a goal of Lake Watch for 5 years, and a lot of effort went into reaching the final outcome. Although ADEM dragged its feet for too long on the issue, they should now be commended for doing the right thing, particularly for their rejection of a plea made by Alexander City to maintain the status quo.

A lot of people got involved in this issue: the Alabama Rivers Alliance, Alabama Water Watch, and many others. But the real catalyst for decisive action was the Legal Environmental Assistance Foundation. It was LEAF who filed suit against EPA demanding that ADEM meet the requirements of the Federal Clean Water Act. And it is LEAF to whom we are most indebted.

The new classification is important to Lake Martin because it finally establishes specific water quality criteria that can be measured and enforced in an area of the lake that, for too long, has been used as a sacrifice zone. The portion of Lake Martin, from where Sugar Creek enters the lake all the way to the Dean Road boat landing, now has reasonable standards for dissolved oxygen, color content, and bacteriological levels. And you can rest assured that we are **aggressively monitoring and testing** that embayment where large quantities of contaminated sewage sludge still cover the lake bottom to ensure that new water quality standards are met.

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• **SUGAR CREEK TOXICITY.** Does the upgrade of Sugar Creek mean that problems there are now behind us? *Not quite!* According to ADEM reports, the Sugar Creek wastewater treatment plant *continues to fail chronic toxicity tests* for its discharge into Sugar Creek and the lake. A Consent Order between ADEM and Alexander City requires that chronic toxicity limits be met not later than **28 December 1997**, or the City will begin incurring daily fines. It is our understanding that the City and local industries continue to work on the problem, and it is our hope they "beat the clock". We'll continue to monitor the situation and keep you informed.

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• **CULTURAL EUTROPHICATION OF STATE WATERS.** Lake Watch members who attended the Alabama Water Watch Technical Conference at Auburn University in February heard an excellent presentation by Dr David Bayne of the AU Fisheries Department concerning deteriorating water quality in lakes throughout Alabama. Dr Bayne discussed a recent Auburn University study that found an alarming increase in the trophic status (nutrient content) of state waterbodies, **including Lake Martin**. The problem is caused by increasing amounts of organic matter, much of it man-made, that causes changes in aquatic biota that can interfere with water uses, detract from natural beauty, and reduce the economic value of the water resource.

Although organic loading of waterbodies occurs naturally as part of a lake's aging process, **man's activities** can greatly accelerate this condition through a number of factors: **population growth, industrialization, intensive agricultural and forestry production, recreational activities, and development of shoreline properties.**

> Each of these factors have a direct impact on Lake Martin.

According to the study, Lake Martin has experienced a significant increase in its trophic status in the past ten years. In some of the Alabama lakes where such organic increases occurred, major water quality problems, such as the following, were noted:

- ◊ excessive aquatic plants
- ◊ interference with maintaining a good drinking water supply
- ◊ fish kills
- ◊ decreased water clarity
- ◊ wide fluctuations in pH, surface water temperatures, and light penetration

Dr Bayne believes the state-wide problem must be addressed through **legislation** to establish specific water quality standards for each major lake in the state. This would set the framework for analysis of each lake to determine the source of excessive organic loading, both point source and non-point source. It would also establish specific limits for the discharge of total nitrogen and total phosphorus from wastewater treatment plants.

[Note that none of the lakes in Alabama have lake water quality standards that directly address cultural eutrophication. In addition, none of the wastewater treatment plants that discharge into Lake Martin have limits on the discharge of nitrogen or phosphorus.]

With regard to Lake Martin, Dr Bayne has suggested that a **special monitoring program** for nitrates and phosphates be established to develop baseline data similar to that collected for the past three years through our Alabama Water Watch monitoring program.

> Lake Watch has obtained (on a trial basis) a LaMotte Colorimeter that permits accurate testing for virtually any parameter. **Preliminary tests for nitrates and phosphates have already been completed at six locations on the lake:**

- ◊ **Main channel** of the Tallapoosa River (two miles upstream of Alexander City) to establish upstream **base line data**
- ◊ **Coley Creek** embayment in Lake Martin (to test for organics from the Coley Creek sewage treatment plant)
- ◊ **Sugar Creek** embayment in Lake Martin (to test for organics from the Sugar Creek sewage treatment plant)
- ◊ **Dennis Creek** area (to test for organic runoff from the Alexander City Golf Course)
- ◊ **Sandy Creek** area (to test for organics from the Dadeville sewage treatment plant)
- ◊ **Stillwaters Resort** area (to test for organics from golf courses)

All test data has been sent to Alabama Water Watch for computer entry and analysis. The initial look at the data indicates a **potential problem with nitrates and phosphates** from the Coley Creek and Sugar Creek plants. More tests are underway.

Other sites scheduled to be tested soon include:

- ◊ **Willow Point** Golf Course area
- ◊ **Wind Creek State Park** area
- ◊ **Lake Martin RV Park** area
- ◊ The area near **Martin Dam** to establish downstream base line data

*> Clearly, this new effort to focus in more detail on factors that impact on Lake Martin is a major step for our Water Quality Monitoring Program. Lake Watch already has one of the premier volunteer monitoring programs in the state, and this new focus will only strengthen our ability to identify future trends in lake water quality. Of course, none of this would be possible without a dedicated group of volunteer monitors. You will be hearing much more about the expanded testing program and the people who make it happen in future newsletters.*

• **ANNUAL ALABAMA WATER WATCH MEETING.** The Auburn folks will host their annual meeting from **10:00 AM - 2:00 PM** on **Saturday, 14 June** at the same AU fish pond & pavilion as last year (call AWW or Bronson's for directions). Special invitations have been sent to state legislators, state and local government officials, and educators in order to spread the word about the great work being accomplished by Alabama Water Watch volunteers. This will be an excellent opportunity to meet people from around the state who have the same interests in water quality as we do.

All Lake Watch members are encouraged to attend. A special request is made to those who have taken the water quality monitoring training in the past and have participated in some sort of monitoring. Let's have a great Lake Watch turnout!

A catfish lunch will be provided FREE by Alabama Water Watch. They need an accurate count of attendees, so RSVP to Tina or Allison at 1-888-844-4785 (toll free) by **2 June**.

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• **ANNUAL LAKE WATCH MEETING.** Our annual membership meeting will be held at **6:00 PM** on **Tuesday, 24 June 1997** at the **Elks Lodge** in Alexander City. This meeting is open to all Lake Watch members, and all are encouraged to attend.

In accordance with our by-laws, we'll have a short business meeting to elect officers and board members, followed by a special guest speaker who you won't want to miss! We'll close out the meeting with a catered meal (FREE), and we'll have plenty of time for **casual fellowship**.

Since this is a catered meal, we must commit to a specific number of meals, so please let us know **as soon as possible** if you will attend by calling Mary Ann Bronson (825-9353) or Virginia Pietrzykowski (825-6412). *Please call NLT 17 June.*

[The Elks Lodge is located on Lake Martin near the Highway 280 bridge (southeast side of Alexander City). The entrance to Elks Parkway is on Highway 280 one-half mile west of the bridge; follow the yellow road lines one-half mile to the lodge. There is plenty of parking available.]

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• **MEMBERSHIP DUES.** May is the month for renewal of Lake Watch 1997-98 memberships, and many of you have already sent in your checks . Thank you!

Lake Watch is entering its **sixth** year, and our treasury is in good shape (we'll have a report on that at the annual meeting). However, we will probably have a hefty expenditure if we decide to purchase a Colorimeter and other equipment, so we still need those membership dues.

> And please, mention Lake Watch to your neighbors and friends.....give me their names and addresses.....and I'll send them a courtesy newsletter to encourage them to join us.

**Thanks again for your loyal support!**

~~~~~

• See you at the Alabama Water Watch meeting & fish fry on 14 June in Auburn.

• See you at the annual Lake Watch meeting & dinner on 24 June at the Elks Lodge.

>>> HAVE A GREAT SUMMER! <<<

# Lake Watch

of Lake Martin

Newsletter No. 16  
5 December 1997

Dick Bronson, President  
(205) 825-9353

It's time for another newsletter to let members know of important events that affect the Lake Martin community.

## Remembrance

- We're saddened by the death of **Charlie Zeisler**, one of the original members of Lake Watch, and a valued friend. Charlie will be remembered for his great sense of humor and his willingness to assist in any project. Our sincerest condolences to **Ruth** and family from all of us.

## Lake Watch Annual Meeting

- We had a great turnout at our annual meeting at the Elks Lodge on 24 June 1997. Several guests, including Alexander City Mayor **Don McClellan** and City Council members **Gwen Coley** and **Glenn Thomas**, listened to an entertaining and informative presentation about protecting endangered species by **Robert Seidler**, Special Investigator with the Alabama Game and Fish Division.
- During the meeting, the first annual "**Woodfin Martin Award**" was presented to **Virginia Pietrzykowski** for her outstanding service to Lake Watch as Secretary-Treasurer and as the Volunteer Monitor Coordinator. On hand to assist in the presentation was **Mrs Woodfin Martin**, whose late husband will be remembered for his long standing interest in protecting his beloved Lake Martin.
- Also attending were **Bill and Janet Deutsch**. Bill is the Director of the Alabama Water Watch Program and has been our mentor since we began conducting volunteer monitoring over 4 years ago.

## Alabama Water Watch Annual Meeting

- Lake Watch was well represented at the annual Water Watch fish fry in Auburn on 14 June 1997. It was a great turnout, with plenty of educators and officials, and clearly showed that citizens are taking an increasingly strong interest in protecting and improving the quality of Alabama's streams and lakes. Please mark your calendars for the AWW event next year scheduled for 13 June 1998.

## Lake Watch Board of Directors Meeting

- The Board of Directors met at the Bronson's home on 30 September 1997 to welcome new board members **Kathryn Braund** and **John Glasier**. They replaced outgoing board members **Larry Locke** and **Jack Bush**.
- The Treasurer reported a balance of \$3259. The Board approved purchase of an **Oxygen/Temperature Meter** with a deep water probe (approx cost \$450) that will enable lake monitors to conduct accurate **dissolved oxygen profiles** of the deeper waters of Lake Martin. This valuable data will be coupled with other data now

collected on a monthly basis by monitors to further assess long range trends in lake water quality. The test meter will also be used to conduct quality control checks on data collected with the LaMotte chemical test kits, and will assist in determining causes for fish kills, either on the lake or local streams and ponds.

- Board members also discussed a challenge to ADEM permit policy that currently allows different standards for color limits in textile waste water discharges. The current color limit for Alexander City's Sugar Creek waste water treatment plant, discharging into tiny Sugar Creek, is 80 ADMI (a measure of dye content established by the American Dye Manufacturers Institute), while the Wetumpka waste water treatment plant, that discharges textile dyes into the much larger Alabama River, has a more restrictive color limit of 50 ADMI. Lake Watch has pointed out the obvious inconsistency of color standards and has asked ADEM to change the color limit for the Sugar Creek plant to the more restrictive 50 ADMI. > Should ADEM deny our request, we have been advised by the Legal Environmental Assistance Foundation to consider filing an action to the Environmental Protection Agency. We'll keep you posted.

~~~~~  
Toxicity and Sugar Creek

- It appears that Alexander City's Sugar Creek waste water treatment plant has turned the corner in their efforts to comply with chronic toxicity requirements of their permit and an ADEM Consent Order. **Al Phillips**, Plant Superintendent, reports that the plant has passed at least a dozen tests since May 1997 using a technique of dilution by augmenting the effluent flow with up to 1 million gallons of potable water per day. The City has requested that ADEM approve this method as an interim measure pending completion of a flow augmentation facility that would divert river water into the treatment plant for dilution purposes.

- We salute the City's efforts toward solving a long standing problem with the plant, and we look forward to the day when the Sugar Creek issue is finally behind us.

~~~~~  
Visitors from Senegal

- On 10 November 1997, a few Lake Watch members were privileged to meet with a delegation of officials from the country of Senegal, Africa and discuss mutual concerns about water quality and quantity issues. **John & Sharon Glasier, Larry & Roberta Klass, and Dr Bill Deutsch & Allison Busby** of Alabama Water Watch joined 6 Senegalese water managers at the Bronson's home for lunch and discussion. Their visit to America was sponsored by the US Agency for International Development and was arranged through Auburn University. Working through a *French* interpreter, the discussions were lively and informative, and showed again how fortunate we are to live on and around the cleanest lake in the state. The visit was most enjoyable; the only regret is that not more members could participate in meeting such interesting people. > Lake Watch was presented a gift of beautifully hand-tooled leather sandals from Senegal; we'll have them on display at the next membership meeting.



### Local "Water War"

- A month ago, it was discovered that the City of Auburn had hired a firm to determine possible future sources of municipal water, including considering the withdrawal of water from Lake Martin. During an invitation-only meeting at Stillwaters Resort, a plan was discussed that would require construction of a water treatment plant near the lake, and pump water via a pipeline to Auburn.
- In an effort to clarify the situation, a special Lake Watch meeting was called for 10:00 AM on Monday 10 November 1997 at the Central Alabama Community College, and over 60 concerned citizens responded, including Senator Ted Little, members of the Tallapoosa County Commission, and representatives of Alexander City, Dadeville, and Auburn. A presentation was made by **Steve Cawood**, representing the engineering firm conducting the study for Auburn. Other input was provided by members of the Auburn Water Board.
- During the meeting, it was determined that a feasibility study had been initiated by Auburn 18 months ago and was completed 6 months ago. The project would entail purchase of land in the Blue Creek area for a treatment plant, construction of a pipeline from Lake Martin to Auburn, and withdrawal of a vague but substantial amount of water each day. It was stated that the plans were preliminary and any withdrawal would only be used to supplement water already available to Auburn.
- Several important questions and points were raised during the meeting:
  - > Is there sufficient water available in the Auburn area to meet future demands of the city? [Answer: Yes, but it is not as clean as that in Lake Martin.]
  - > Were other sources of water besides Lake Martin considered? [Answer: Unclear, but probably no other sources were given serious consideration.]
  - > Wouldn't all water taken by Auburn be lost to Lake Martin? [Answer: Yes, most would be returned to the Tallapoosa River basin, but below Martin Dam.]
  - > What about withdrawing water from Yates Lake (immediately downstream from the Martin Dam)? [Answer: This source will be studied, since such a plan would save a considerable amount of compensation required to be paid by Auburn to Alabama Power Company for lost power generation capability.]
- The Auburn plan was then briefed to the Tallapoosa County Commission, and it appears likely they will appoint a County Task Force as an interim measure to deal with this and other related issues. In addition, the Commission is considering a resolution to formally oppose any action by Auburn to withdraw water from Lake Martin. Meetings have been held with Senator Little and other officials to ensure that Auburn's plans, at least as they affect Lake Martin, are put on hold until the Georgia-Alabama water allocation process is completed. There have also been discussions about possible legal action as a last resort. > We'll keep you posted.

### The Broader Issue

- Our dispute with Auburn has highlighted a critical flaw in the way the state deals with in-state water resource disputes. Despite passage of the Alabama Water Resources Act in 1993, there is **no state agency with regulatory authority** over the withdrawal of public waters. *In effect, no Alabama agency has the authority to approve or disapprove such water withdrawal projects.*

- This issue has been discussed with state officials and the Alabama Rivers Alliance in an effort to head off a problem that will only increase in Alabama as more and more communities look to their future water needs. Clearly, **legislation is required soon to assign regulatory authority over the use of state public waters.**  
> Lake Watch will continue to press the issue.

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### Inter-state Water Compacts

- As most of you know, President Clinton recently signed into law a compact mechanism to establish an equitable water allocation formula between Georgia and Alabama that will directly affect the quantity and quality of water flowing into Lake Martin. That negotiating process is now underway, and must be completed by the end of 1998 or the compacts expire, at which time both states will be back in Court.

- Since the inter-state issue began in the early 90's, much reliance has been placed on a Federal and State funded *Comprehensive Study* effort to determine water availability and water needs. This study is at least one year from completion. In the meantime, Georgia has been conducting a parallel study named the *West Georgia Regional Reservoir Study* which is scheduled for completion this month. This second study makes it clear that Georgia has every intention of building a reservoir on the Tallapoosa River. In fact, a public hearing has been scheduled for 7:00 PM on 9 December 1997 in Buchanan, Georgia to provide the public "an opportunity to comment upon and provide input into the proposed selection of a West Georgia Regional Reservoir to serve the Tallapoosa River Basin." In the opinion of many Alabama officials, this action is premature and violates, at least in spirit, the great effort already expended in both states to pass the Inter-state Water Compacts and begin working on the critical water allocation process.

- To further complicate an already complicated matter, it appears that population and water demand projections in both of the above mentioned studies are skewed favorably toward Georgia and unfavorably against Alabama. Georgia's *West Georgia Regional Reservoir Study* discards data found in the *Comprehensive Study* and instead, shows significantly higher future population projections in the counties that desire water from the Tallapoosa, one as high as 105% increase. These population projections, in turn, cause their water demand projections to increase over 50% above what the *Comprehensive Study* shows over the next 50 years.

- At the same time, the Alabama future population projections in the *Comprehensive Study* for Tallapoosa County show almost no future growth, and a significant decrease in water demand well into the next century.

• The importance of these projections during the upcoming water allocation process is critical. If Alabama officials enter into water allocation negotiations using data that shows a decrease in water demand, while Georgia negotiators have data showing an increase in water demand, we'll come out on the short end of the stick.....every time! Our concerns about the accuracy of the data, particularly that which understates our projected water demands, have been brought to the attention of local and state officials, and to the Office of Water Resources in an effort to somehow get this train back on track. >Stay tuned for further developments.

~~~~~

### Next Year

• Based on the speed in which events about Auburn and Georgia are happening, it's likely that we'll schedule a general membership meeting soon after the new year. In the meantime, the officers and board members of Lake Watch wish all of you a happy and safe holiday season. >See you next year!

~~~~~

### Reflections

As we prepare to close out another year, it might be useful to reflect on how fortunate we are that groups such as Lake Watch can participate in the process of determining state and local policies that impact on us all. During our discussions with the visitors from Senegal, they were constantly amazed to learn that common ordinary citizens could actually make a difference.

Lake Watch has made a difference, thanks to the dedicated members who truly care about our lake.

~~~~~

Reminder: Income tax time is just around the corner, as if you didn't already know! If you are planning to make a donation to a charitable organization before the end of the year and take a deduction, please consider Lake Watch as a recipient. The IRS has designated Lake Watch as a 501 (c)(3) charitable organization, so any donation is tax deductible. We'll send you written proof of donation if you desire.

Again, thanks!

# Lake Watch

of Lake Martin

Newsletter No. 17  
23 March 1998

Dick Bronson, President  
(205) 825-9353

This letter provides an update on issues of interest to members and the Lake Martin community, and announces dates of several important events.

## Meeting of Lake Watch Board of Directors

- The Board discussed the following items at the Bronson's home on 18 March 1998:
  - Treasurer balance: \$2946.11.
  - By a unanimous vote, the Board approved joining the **Chambers of Commerce** of Alexander City and Dadeville at their invitation.
  - The annual Lake Watch general membership meeting was discussed. It was agreed to have a **picnic on Lake Martin in mid-summer**. Locations and possible guest speakers were discussed. **Details will be provided by separate newsletter.**
  - It was announced that the terms of four Board members expire in May 1998. All will be contacted to determine if they wish to be renominated or be replaced. Possible nominees were discussed. A **slate of proposed Board members** will be provided for vote by the general membership at the annual meeting.
  - An update of on-going actions was provided (see details below).

## Dates to Remember

- **18 April** (Saturday): **Second annual Alabama Water Watch Technical Conference** at Foy Union (Room 213), Auburn University, 10:00 AM to 4:30 PM. Topics will include *Alabama Water...What's It Worth?* and *Results of Citizen Monitoring in Alabama*. Registration fee is \$15, which includes lunch; deadline to sign up is 3 April. Call Virginia Pietrzykowski at 825-6412 for registration forms. > Lake Watch had a large turnout last year and enjoyed a great conference.
- **22 April** (Wednesday): **EPA hearing** at the Holiday Inn Motel, 120 Madison Ave, Montgomery, 1:00 - 5:00 and 6:00 - 10:00 PM. The purpose is to obtain public comments on EPA's proposed upgrade of all streams in Alabama that are still classified below Fish & Wildlife status. This is a continuation of the suit filed by the Legal Environmental Assistance Foundation (LEAF) through which Sugar Creek was upgraded to F&W last year. Lake Watch strongly supports this action by EPA.
- **2 May** (Saturday): **Volunteer monitor training workshop** at the Elks Lodge in Alexander City, 9:00 AM - 2:00 PM, to certify new volunteers and re-certify those who currently conduct monthly monitoring. Lunch provided by Lake Watch. If any new volunteers are interested in taking the training, please call for details.
- **29 - 31 May** (Friday PM thru Sunday AM): **Alabama Rivers Alliance Leadership**

**Conference** at Guntersville State Park. Registration fee is \$25; nice accommodations available at the Park. This will be a great weekend to meet other environmental groups and participate in an excellent conference. Call Dick Bronson for details.

- **13 June** (Saturday): Annual **Alabama Water Watch meeting and fish fry** at the Auburn Fisheries Department pavilion and picnic area (fish pond). Lake Watch has always had a large turnout and enjoyed a great day. We'll have more details later.

- **Summer:** Annual Lake Watch meeting and picnic on Lake Martin. **Details later.**

~~~~~  
**Color Limits for Sugar Creek**

- As discussed in our previous newsletter, Lake Watch requested late last year that ADEM reconsider their color limit standards for waste water permitted to be discharged into state waters. At issue is the inconsistent application of color limits for waste water treatment plants in Alexander City and Wetumpka. The Wetumpka plant has a more restrictive color limit for discharge into the Alabama River than does the Alexander City plant that discharges into tiny Sugar Creek. Recently, ADEM denied our request for reconsideration.

- At the advice of the Legal Environmental Assistance Foundation (LEAF), Lake Watch has **written to EPA** charging ADEM with inconsistent application of water quality standards, and asking that a more stringent color limit be applied to the Sugar Creek plant. We'll provide more details as things develop.

~~~~~  
**Local "Water War"**

- As reported earlier, there is considerable concern about plans by the Auburn Water Board to construct a water treatment plant near Lake Martin and withdraw water for municipal purposes for Auburn. A series of local meetings culminated with a unanimous decision by the Tallapoosa County Commission to file a formal objection to the water board's plans. The Commission also directed the County Attorney to take legal action unless Auburn agrees to put their plans on hold until the on-going water allocation process between Georgia and Alabama provides a better understanding of the impact of such withdrawals.

- Lake Watch Board member John Glasier recently completed an in-depth study of the possible impact of the proposed Auburn water withdrawal on Lake Martin. He concluded that the impact could be significant, particularly when other future withdrawals during low flow periods are factored in. Copies of John's study were provided to the Auburn Water Board, local and county officials, legislators, and other interested parties. *[A great deal of scholarly effort went into the study, and its completion marks a significant step forward in the ability of Lake Watch to produce strong and well documented arguments on issues facing the lake. We owe John a debt of gratitude for his important contribution to Lake Watch.]*

- As a result of Lake Watch's intervention in the issue, it appears that Auburn is taking a look at other options that would not affect Lake Martin. At the monthly

meeting of the Auburn Water Board on 9 March 1998, new options were presented by the board's engineering firm, along with a cost analysis of the options. One option proposes that Auburn construct a water treatment plant on Thurlow Lake (formed by Thurlow Dam that crosses the Tallapoosa River in Tallassee). This would be a joint project between Auburn and the City of Tallassee, and would provide water to both cities.

- The Thurlow option appears to have some very real cost advantages to Auburn, particularly in avoiding significant lost power generation costs to Alabama Power Company because neither Martin nor Yates dams would be bypassed. Lake Watch views these developments with cautious optimism and looks forward to hearing more details at the next meeting of the Auburn Water Board on 13 April.

~~~~~  
**Tax Exempt Status**

- At the end of our advance ruling period, the IRS recently granted Lake Watch final approval of its 501 (c) (3) tax exempt status. In accordance with the Code, we will make available for public inspection a copy of our exemption application, supporting documents, and the exemption letter.

- This means that Lake Watch is considered a bona fide **scientific, educational, and charitable** organization under section **501 (c) (3)** of the Code. As before, your contributions to Lake Watch are fully tax deductible.

~~~~~  
**Lake Watch Memberships Due**

- Yep, it's time to renew your annual membership. And even though your dues are tax deductible (see item above), it is hoped that the real reason you remain a member is to be a part of an organization working to ensure a bright future for Lake Martin.

- Lake Watch is **unique** because we focus on water quality issues and actually do something about them. We're a small organization..... we don't do membership drives, we don't need a large number of folks who are simply "members", but we do appeal to those who are action-oriented.

- Many thanks for your loyalty.

~~~~~  
>>> tear off and mail to: Lake Watch of Lake Martin, P.O. Box 72, Alexander City, AL 35011 <<<

LAKE WATCH MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION  
May 1998-May 1999

new                       renewal

name \_\_\_\_\_ phone \_\_\_\_\_

address \_\_\_\_\_

dues:                       \$10 (1 pers)                       \$20 family                       \$25 business                       other  
{Lake Watch is a non-profit, 501 (c) (3) organization. Your contribution is tax deductible.}

# Lake Watch

of Lake Martin

Newsletter No. 18  
2 June 1998

Dick Bronson, President  
(256) 825-9353

- This will be a short newsletter so we can get it in the mail in time for members to make final plans for two summertime events.

## Remembrance

- First, let's take a moment to remember someone special. **Rosemary Chandler**, wife of Board member George, died a few days ago. Rosemary will be remembered for her dedication to Lake Watch.....no one recalls her ever missing a meeting or event, and she was an active volunteer monitor for years. We will miss her humor and her presence a great deal. Our condolences to George and family.

## Alabama Water Watch Annual Meeting & Fishfry

- Alabama Water Watch will hold its annual meeting on **Saturday 13 June 1998** in Auburn. The schedule is as follows:

|                  |                                                                                                                                               |
|------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 09:30 - 10:00 am | - Registration, <b>Pharmacy Auditorium</b> , Auburn University<br>(Duncan Drive; call Bronson's for directions or map)                        |
| 10:00 - 12:00 am | - Guest speaker (Dr Steve Malvestuto)<br>- View new Water Watch video<br>- Presentation of ADEM highlights<br>- Update on Water Watch Program |
| 12:00 - 12:30 pm | - Travel to fish pond (2 mi So of Hwy 280 near Auburn)                                                                                        |
| 12:30 - 2:00 pm  | - Fishfry at AU fisheries pavilion                                                                                                            |
| 2:00 - 3:00 pm   | - Awards and Board elections                                                                                                                  |

> Lake Watch has always had strong attendance at this enjoyable event, and we hope many of you will attend again this year. Please call Mary Ann Bronson (825-9353) or Virginia Pietrzykowski (825-6412) for more details.

## Lake Watch Annual Meeting & Picnic

- Lake Watch will hold its annual meeting at **D.A.R.E. Park**, pavilion #1, on Lake Martin near Dadeville on **Saturday 1 August 1998** from **11:00 AM to 2:00 PM**. Our only order of business will be to elect 3 new members to our Board of Directors to replace outgoing members. A slate of nominees will be presented, and additional nominations will be taken from the floor.

We'll then hear from guest speaker **Malcolm Pierson**, who is a senior aquatic field biologist with Alabama Power Company. Malcolm will speak on the impressive biodiversity of the Tallapoosa River, and how that diversity is so vital to the health of Lake Martin. He will have samples of the types of organisms found in the river.

At **12:00**, we'll have a catered lunch (paid by Lake Watch) followed by just plain old fellowship. Since this is a catered meal, we'll need an accurate count of attendees.  
>>> Please call Mary Ann or Virginia for reservations. See you there!

### Sugar Creek

• It was reported in a previous newsletter that Alexander City's waste water treatment plant appeared to have turned the corner in attaining compliance with chronic toxicity requirements of their permit by using authorized flow augmentation into Sugar Creek. However, the technique actually being used is to add 1 million gallons per day of dilution water into the waste stream prior to the sampling point for toxicity testing.

Clearly, the practice of diluting the waste water before testing for toxicity is improper and violates the intent of the Clean Water Act. Simply put, the practice merely masks the toxicity problem rather than doing anything to correct it.

A recent Lake Watch letter to the Federal EPA Administrator in Atlanta challenged the practice of dilution and requested a review of the entire matter. A reply from EPA indicates agreement with the Lake Watch position and states that a complete review of the circumstances is underway. We'll keep you posted on this issue.

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• Here is a quick update on two other issues we'll cover in more depth next time.

> Auburn-Lake Martin water issue: There are recent indications that a **regional water authority** may soon be formed to construct a water treatment plant on Lake Thurlow (Tallassee) and provide water to several downstream users.

> Georgia-Alabama "water war": Lake Watch has been involved in several meetings concerning the ACT basin in an effort to stress the vital importance of the **linkage between quality and quantity** in any discussion of future water withdrawals, particularly from the Tallapoosa River.

.....

### Membership renewal

• A reminder that May is the month for renewal of your Lake Watch membership. And many thanks to those of you who have already renewed. Please use the enclosed application when you send in your check. Thanks!

>>> SEE YOU ON 13 JUNE and 1 AUGUST<<<

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# Lake Watch

of Lake Martin

Newsletter No. 19  
7 December 1998

Dick Bronson, President  
(256) 825-9353

## Remembrance

• First, let's pause a moment to reflect on two deceased members of Lake Watch.  
> **Faye Brazzell**, wife of Board member Forrest, died in October after a short illness. Faye accompanied her husband to many Lake Watch meetings and events, and was a most gracious lady. Forrest, you have our condolences.

> **Clement "Kike" Meyers**, my father-in-law, died in September. I don't recall a Lake Watch meeting he missed, and the strong encouragement he and Dortha gave us will always be remembered. Mary Ann and I miss his gentle spirit and humor.

## Sugar Creek Verdict

• Most of you know by now that a Birmingham jury awarded \$52 million to nine Raintree residents last month in their Lake Martin pollution lawsuit against Russell Corporation, Avondale Mills, and Alabama Power Company.

• This case was about a failure by the defendants to accept responsibility for causing pollution, for failing to prevent pollution, and for failing to protect public waters from pollution. First filed in 1993, the case faced several attempts by the defendants to move the trial to Tallapoosa County. In the end, a conservative jury of 12 intelligent and honest citizens from Jefferson County concluded, unanimously, that the defendants must be held accountable for their actions.

• During the four weeks of trial, the jury heard numerous witnesses and considered an enormous amount of evidence from both sides. That evidence included reports of failed toxicity tests, studies that revealed causes of toxicity, testimony of large amounts of chemicals (some carcinogenic) being discharged into Lake Martin, and testimony from local residents. Post-trial comments from jurors revealed that, simply put, they believed the plaintiffs but not the defendants.

• This, of course, may not be the end of the story, since the defendants may appeal. Whatever happens, it is hoped that the two textile industries hear the message from the jury that the pollution must stop. We are awaiting some indication that serious consideration is being given to implementing an appropriate **pretreatment system** to remove toxicity from the textile dye waste water before sending it to the City's waste water treatment plant. This course of action was recommended in a 1995 toxicity study, but was rejected. Pretreatment is the answer.....always has been.....always will be.

## Lake Watch Meeting

• A general membership meeting will be held on **Thursday, December 10, 1998 at 6:00 PM** in the **CACC Library Building** (3rd floor, Horizons Room, next to RSVP). The agenda will include a discussion of the lawsuit, an update on Water Wars, and a short discussion of plans for our environmental education program. We'll also have light holiday refreshments. The meeting is open to the public.

Grant for Environmental Education

- Lake Watch recently received a \$750 grant that was arranged by Senator Ted Little. The funds will be used to purchase equipment and materials for water quality education classes our volunteers will provide to schools and youth groups in the Lake Martin area. When you have the opportunity, please tell Senator Little you appreciate his efforts on our behalf.

~~~~~

Update on Water Wars

- The water allocation committees from Georgia and Alabama have met several times this year to develop a water allocation formula for the Alabama-Coosa-Tallapoosa River Basin, and Lake Watch has been well represented at all meetings. Both states have produced draft documents, and Lake Watch has voiced strong concerns about those documents to the committees, to the Federal Environmental Protection Agency, to the US Fish & Wildlife Service, and to the Federal Commissioner who oversees the entire process.

- Our concerns with the draft documents have focused on the absence of any meaningful consideration of water quality. During the last meeting in Montgomery, both Georgia and Alabama agreed to extend the deadline for an agreement. This extension will give stakeholders more time to work with the committees to ensure that water quality is included in whatever water allocation formula is ultimately approved. We'll keep members posted on progress.

~~~~~

Looking Ahead

- As we reflect back over the past 6 years since Lake Watch formed in 1992, we've had more than our share of successes.....and we have made a difference. We've seen a lot of progress on the Sugar Creek issue, although it will probably be around for some time yet, either because of appeals, or EPA enforcement, or other actions.

- I believe our future course is clear. The focus of Lake Watch has been, and will be, on **water quality**.....that's our niche. We'll continue our monthly lake monitoring program with Alabama Water Watch. We'll continue our public awareness program about water quality issues. And we'll spend more time conducting classes on water quality to children in the Lake Martin area. Last summer, Lake Watch volunteers conducted basic biological assessment classes to more than 200 young citizens, and we barely scratched the surface. We've made a commitment to area schools, youth organizations, and the Alabama Cooperative Extension System to teach the importance of water quality. There will be plenty of opportunity for Lake Watch members to volunteer their time and talent working with kids.

- On that note, let's enjoy the coming holiday season as we look forward to 1999!

>>> See you at the Lake Watch meeting on 10 December. <<<

*Merry Christmas and Happy New Year!*

# Lake Watch

of Lake Martin

Newsletter No. 20  
25 May 1999

Dick Bronson, President  
(256) 825-9353

~~~~~  
• It's been awhile since the last newsletter in December.....sorry, but time just seems to slip away. Anyway, here goes.....  
~~~~~

## Farewell to the Niedermeiers

• Two of the early members of Lake Watch, **Bill & BJ Niedermeier**, have moved from the lake back to Birmingham. Dr Bill's scientific background was invaluable in helping us evaluate the various environmental factors in keeping our lake clean. Both were very active in community activities and will be greatly missed. We wish them the best of luck!  
~~~~~

## Board Meeting

• The Board of Directors met at the Bronson's home on 5 March 1999 and addressed the following agenda items:

> Approved continued annual membership in the following organizations: Alexander City Chamber of Commerce, Dadeville Chamber of Commerce, Legal Environmental Assistance Foundation (LEAF), and Alabama Rivers Alliance.

> Approved continued membership in Alabama Water Watch once they establish an organizational membership category (their membership rules are currently under review).

> Acknowledged a major donation from Neal Andrews.

> Approved a contribution to the Alabama League of Environmental Action Voters. A-LEAV is an organization newly formed by Joe Turnham to conduct environmental lobbying for grassroots groups, such as Lake Watch, who are precluded from active lobbying.

> Set the date for the annual Lake Watch meeting & picnic for **Saturday 18 September 1999** at **D.A.R.E. Park** on Lake Martin near Dadeville. Lake Watch will provide catering. More details later; please block your calendars.

> Discussed various aspects of the Sugar Creek issue. (more on this below)  
~~~~~

## Living Streams program at Camp ASCCA

• Once again, Lake Watch volunteers participated with Alabama Water Watch in a 3-day Science Camp at Camp ASCCA with 100 fifth-graders from St. James Academy in Montgomery. Dr Bill Deutsch and Wendi Winter, of Alabama Water Watch, conducted a certification workshop on biological assessment for 6 Lake Watchers (**Bronsons, Glasiers, Stan Pietrzykowski, and George Chandler**) the morning of 7 April. We were joined later by **Bill Stewart** and spent the remainder of the week conducting 10 *Living Stream* sessions with the kids on.....and in..... two small streams at Camp ASCCA. Participation by the children, their parents, and teachers was great.....they even discovered several beautifully colored Tallapoosa darters and some mottled sculpins (as described in the *Fishes of Alabama* book).

- We plan to have several other Lake Watch members trained in biological assessment for future training programs for Cub Scouts, Boys & Girls Clubs, and area schools. If other members are interested in helping with *Living Streams* programs this year, please contact me. I guarantee you'll enjoy getting wet with the kids!

~~~~~

#### Telly Award

- Alabama Water Watch was recently honored by being named winner in a national competition for their video *Living Downstream*. The video was produced for Water Watch by Barry McConatha of Auburn University, and used a script by Dr Bill Deutsch and narration by various Water Watch folks. It captures the "down home" spirit of Alabama Water Watch and the great work the citizen volunteer monitors are doing throughout the state.
- Last year, more than 10,000 entries competed for Telly Awards, including such winners as The Discovery Channel, Warner Brothers, CNBC, and 20th Century Fox. Now that's tough competition! Congratulations AWW.  
[I have a copy of the video which we'll show at the annual meeting in September; it's also available for loan to members.]

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#### Alabama Section 303 (d) List

- Late last year, EPA determined that ADEM's 1998 list of **polluted streams** [Section 303 (d) list] failed to include more than 100 streams that EPA considered impaired enough for listing. EPA published their list of additional streams that included **Sugar Creek**, and conducted a public hearing in Montgomery on 11 March 1999 to receive public input.
- At the hearing, a spokesman for Alexander City argued that Sugar Creek should not be listed because the City's efforts to correct problems with their waste water treatment plant had resulted in a much cleaner stream. Lake Watch argued that there was clear and ample evidence that Sugar Creek was still seriously degraded. In April, Lake Watch submitted a letter to EPA requesting that Sugar Creek remain on Alabama's list of polluted streams. A decision by EPA is pending.

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#### 10 Most Endangered Rivers.....and Water Wars

- On 12 April 1999, American Rivers, of Washington DC, released their *America's Most Endangered Rivers of 1999* report that lists the Alabama-Coosa-Tallapoosa River Basin as the country's 3rd most endangered river basin. The report focused on the on-going "water wars" negotiations between Alabama and Georgia, and cited several reasons for sounding the alarm:
  1. Too much water planned for withdrawal to support metro-Atlanta.
  2. Too much pollution loading from future growth of metro-Atlanta.
  3. Too little emphasis on water quality issues to protect the incredible biodiversity of the ACT basin.
  4. Absence of Alabama water quality standards for **nutrients**. (*a biggie!*)

- If these reasons sound familiar, they should. Lake Watch has been at the forefront on these issues for several years, particularly during the last year of water allocation meetings with Georgia. Early on, our arguments fell on deaf ears, and only recently has there been movement in the right direction.
- The most recent Alabama water allocation proposal includes many of the water quality items we had suggested. That's the good news. The bad news is that Georgia does not agree with the language, and is proposing that existing water quality standards in the Federal Clean Water Act will adequately protect water coming into Alabama. Although that may sound good, it should not be a comfort to those who want to protect the clean waters and biological diversity of our unique river basin, since those same federal standards failed to prevent severe degradation of both the Chattahoochee River and sections of the Coosa River in the past decade.
- The answer to the problem is two-fold. First, the State of Alabama must establish appropriate **nutrient standards** (phosphates, nitrates and chlorophyll a) for water quality. Second, water entering Alabama from Georgia must be **monitored** for compliance with those nutrient standards, along with other already established water quality parameters.
- This was the topic of discussion when Lake Watch participated in a Federal interagency meeting held in Atlanta on 18-19 May 1999. The meeting, chaired by Federal Commissioner Lindsay Thomas and Alternate Commissioner Pete Conroy, included representatives from the US Environmental Protection Agency, the US Geological Survey, the US Fish & Wildlife Service, and the US Corps of Engineers. Also attending were state officials from Georgia, Florida and Alabama, and other environmental organizations.

Participants at the meeting were reminded of a requirement of the Interstate Water Compacts to wit, "*protect water quality, ecology and biodiversity*" of the river basins. A major point of discussion focused on the extensive aquatic biodiversity of the Coosa and Tallapoosa rivers and how to ensure its protection. It was concluded that a system of **monitoring stations** would be installed at critical points throughout the river basins to monitor both the **flow** and **quality** of waters entering Alabama. Clearly, the monitoring system is the **key to success** of any water allocation agreement reached between the three states. A committee was formed to continue working on the monitoring station plan and will meet periodically this Spring and Summer. Lake Watch will participate in these meetings.

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Sugar Creek

- Judge William Wynn, the Birmingham Circuit Judge who presided over the Raintree-Sugar Creek lawsuit case and the \$52 million verdict late last year, submitted a 49-page Order following his **denial** of several motions by defendants Russell Corporation, Avondale Mills, and Alabama Power

Company. In his Order, Judge Wynn laid out rather graphically some events that occurred during the trial and subsequent appeal hearings. He made it crystal clear why the jury found in favor of the plaintiffs, and he had some strong comments about the tactics and actions of defense attorneys. In March, Judge Wynn attempted to have six attorneys for Russell, Avondale, and Alabama Power disbarred and disciplined, and he recently asked the Alabama State Bar to take over the investigation and any subsequent action.

- Local lawyers who read Judge Wynn's Order were heard to observe that any attorney who did the things alleged in the Order deserved to be disbarred. !!!

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More Sugar Creek

- In mid-March, Alexander City officials announced plans to make a major change in the operation of the Sugar Creek sewage plant by **relocating the discharge** now going into Sugar Creek and piping the waste for discharge into Lake Martin downstream from the Highway 280 bridge. Representatives of CH2M Hill have begun a series of meetings with stakeholders to discuss the plan, determine questions and problem areas, and develop answers. This process will continue for several weeks before holding public meetings.

- Lake Watch representatives met with CH2M Hill representatives and provided them with a list of **Lake Watch concerns** about the plan. Some of those concerns are being addressed; however, there are some issues that are **potential deal-breakers**.

- The **most critical issue** is the absolute requirement to deal with the industrial chemical content of the waste stream from the Sugar Creek plant. During the Raintree-Sugar Creek trial last year, the Court heard convincing and unchallenged evidence that a large amount of textile chemicals, some of which are carcinogenic and mutagenic, routinely escape the treatment process within the City's sewage treatment plant and are discharged into the Elkahatchee Creek basin of Lake Martin via Sugar Creek. There was also convincing evidence that several studies were conducted for local textile industries in the recent past that revealed a variety of pretreatment techniques to help them alleviate the problem. However, none of those techniques were adopted, nor is there any indication that industrial pretreatment will be a part of the City's plan to relocate the discharge point.

- > *This means that the same chemicals now being discharged into Sugar Creek will simply be re-routed to the main body of the lake.....with no attempt to address the problem.....and no attempt to deal with the potential long range public health impact. This is unacceptable to most members of Lake Watch, and it should be equally unacceptable to the City. > We intend to press this issue with every means available, including legal steps if necessary.*

- **Another issue** important to the taxpayers of Alexander City is whether the length (and \$4 million cost) of the pipeline is justified. The proposed pipeline route is along Highway 280 for 2.8 miles, then south along Piney Woods Road

for another 2.8 miles to a point near Cecil's Piney Woods Restaurant. The route along Piney Woods Road adds nearly 40% more pipeline (and \$1+ million cost) than routing to a point on the river just south of the Elks Lodge. In addition, the proposed discharge point would be in the vicinity of the existing sewage discharge point from Wind Creek State Park, and these combined discharges could prove troublesome to water quality in that area of the lake. Clearly, the location of the discharge point must be studied further.

- Lake Watch members will recall that the possibility of relocating the Sugar Creek discharge point to the main Tallapoosa River has been a point of discussion with ADEM and the City for several years. And while most of us agree that moving the waste stream to much larger receiving waters could address the water quality problems caused by years of polluting the Sugar Creek and Elkahatchee Creek basins, we would also agree that **stringent safeguards** be required so that serious mistakes of the past aren't repeated. *> It isn't enough to barely meet the requirements of a discharge permit if we don't also look to the future and deal with the chemical constituents we know are in the waste stream. Lake Martin is too valuable an economic asset to simply comply with minimum standards.....we must go the extra mile.*

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Entering our Eighth Year

- Seven years ago (May 1992) a small group of citizens decided to form Lake Watch to deal with concerns about two issues that were adversely affecting Lake Martin; the Alexander City municipal landfill, and the City's Sugar Creek waste water treatment plant that discharged large amounts of textile industrial waste. *> We fixed the landfill problem when the old one closed and the new one was stopped. > We've come a long way toward solving the Sugar Creek problem, although an even bigger fight lies ahead if the City's plan to relocate the discharge point into the main body of the lake fails to deal with the known chemical content of the waste stream.*
- Probably no one in 1992 truly understood how effective the group would be on those local issues, nor how strong an advocate Lake Watch would become for water quality issues affecting Lake Martin and the entire state. We have made a difference, despite those who thought we'd eventually go away.
- So, as we enter our eighth year, we'll remain focused on what we're good at..... **water quality issues**. We'll continue our efforts to protect Lake Martin, we'll strengthen our ability to conduct environmental education programs to young people in the area, and we'll continue to increase public awareness of important issues affecting our quality of life on and around the lake.
- To stay effective, we must maintain our current membership base and add new members when we can. So please, send in the enclosed membership renewal form.....and ask your friends and neighbors to join. Thanks!