

Newsletter No. 41
27 August 2009
www.lakewatch.org

Lake Watch

of Lake Martin

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Another year gone by...and no, it's not time for a New Years celebration...just time for me to carve another notch. The other day someone asked me my age (my grandkids think I'm older than dirt) and my response was that, for some reason, the theme song from "Music Man" keeps running through my head. You know...76 trombones.....
Ok, enough of that. I have some information to share so let's get on with it.

Water Wars. Although the issue of sharing interstate waters between Georgia, Florida and Alabama seemed to be on the back burner for awhile, a recent ruling by US District Judge Paul Magnuson has placed the nearly 20-year dispute back at center stage. The Court made it clear that when Congress authorized the construction of Lake Lanier many years ago, it was primarily for power generation purposes and only minimally for local drinking water needs. This ruling goes to the heart of the controversy because Atlanta's unquenchable thirst has caused the city to tap the Lanier reservoir more and more each year, causing flow problems for downstream neighbors in Florida and Alabama, particularly during drought years.

In his decision Judge Magnuson severely criticized Georgia for failing to secure reliable water sources as the state continues to grow. He set a three-year deadline for the states to reach agreement on water sharing and threatened the admittedly draconian step of returning Atlanta to its 1970 water withdrawal limits if an agreement is not found.

So why is this important to us here on Lake Martin? Let's pause for a quick geography lesson. There are two major river systems at issue...the Apalachicola-Chattahoochee-Flint rivers (ACF) that begin in Georgia and form a portion of the Georgia-Alabama state line on the way south to Apalachicola Bay in the Florida panhandle. The Alabama-Coosa-Tallapoosa rivers (ACT) also have their headwaters in Georgia and constitute a major watershed in Alabama while ultimately flowing into Mobile Bay and the Gulf of Mexico. And it is the Tallapoosa River that forms Lake Martin.

Hold that pause button for one more important bit of information. The US Army Corps of Engineers has established minimum flows from both the Coosa and Tallapoosa rivers in order to maintain sufficient water flow in the Alabama River for barge traffic downstream from Montgomery. That flow is carefully monitored, and when flows are diminished in one river, the other river must make up the difference.

Now for the part that's difficult for folks on Lake Martin to understand. There is no hydrologic connection between Lake Lanier in Georgia and Lake Martin. However, there is such a connection between Lanier and the Coosa River, and when Atlanta's municipal water needs begin to drain Lanier, that affects flows in the Coosa River and inhibits their ability to meet federal minimum flows downstream. So guess which lake is then required to increase its water release? Lake Martin of course. I told you it was complicated!

Bottom line, the judge's decision has sent shock waves through the three states and should be Atlanta's wake-up call to search for alternative ways to meet future water needs. There are several options...none of them easy.

First, they could look for water from other sources such as the Tennessee River to the north or to the eastern seaboard for salt water to desalinate. They could build new storage facilities (reservoirs and quarries) or institute strong water conservation measures. I suspect all of these options will be considered along with many others.

Second, they could try for a political solution wherein Congress modifies the rules for water withdrawal from Lake Lanier. That possibility seems remote because such legislation would require agreement by politicians from around the country, some from Alabama and Florida as well as other states where similar water disputes are ongoing. Initial comments from the Georgia delegation in Washington have indicated that this is not a realistic option.

Third, the Governor of Georgia could make peace with his neighboring states and come to a negotiated agreement wherein interstate waters are shared equitably. And although that would seem the best solution, there are plenty of indications that Georgia Governor Sonny Perdue intends to play hardball and go for a court appeal and other legal action. Not a good sign!

And before anyone thinks the issue will soon be behind us, think again. Surely there will be more to report in future newsletters. I just hope I last until the issue is settled.

Outstanding Alabama Water. Three years ago Lake Watch requested that the Alabama Department of Environmental Management (ADEM) consider Lake Martin for the special water use classification of Outstanding Alabama Water (OAW). Such a designation would officially recognize the special qualities of the lake and provide more protection to what is arguably the cleanest lake in the state.

However, as stated in earlier newsletters, the rules for OAW do not exactly fit the dynamics of reservoirs...they were written for streams. So we knew from the beginning that it was an uphill climb. And we were right.

In a recent letter from ADEM Director Trey Glenn, our request was denied and stated that, while the lake received high scores for water quality and recreational significance, it failed to achieve a sufficiently high score because, "*As a man-made impoundment, Lake Martin has few 'natural characteristics' compared to its original riverine condition.*" That rather obvious observation ticked me off and prompted a strongly worded response back to Director Glenn. My closing request was that his agency develop a process whereby impoundments such as Lake Martin could be considered for special recognition, and we offered to work with his staff on such a project. We're not giving up on this.

Dadeville wastewater treatment plant. As mentioned in the last newsletter, the town of Dadeville has made good progress in upgrading their plant to meet stringent water quality standards in their new permit. Several Lake Watch members toured the plant a few

weeks ago and were impressed with progress. Of course, the real proof will be in their monthly Discharge Monitoring Reports to ADEM. The plant is now officially on line and we'll be looking at whether the plant is able to get back into compliance. If not, we'll take even stronger action than filing a Notice of Intent to Sue that was done two years ago. And while we're on that topic, the town finally signed a Consent Decree with the Alabama Attorney General wherein they paid a \$30,000 fine for previous water quality violations.

We'll keep you posted on progress...but for now, things seem to be on track.

Martin Dam relicensing. The relicensing process continues to go smoothly with strong participation from Lake Watch and Lake Martin HOBOb members. One positive spin-off is the partnership arrangement between Alabama Power Company, Auburn's Alabama Water Watch office, Lake Watch, and HOBObOs to conduct a water quality study of the lake. APCo is funding the project, AWW is doing the scientific water testing and lab analysis, and volunteers are providing boats and helping with sample collection.

The study, which began in April 2009 and concludes in October, will examine water samples from 16 test sites on the lake. Most of these sites are duplicates of over 20 sites sampled during the 3-year federally funded Tallapoosa Watershed Project (TWP). The objective is to determine how water quality in the lake has fared in the 5 years since TWP, particularly since we had two years of drought and things have now returned to near-normal conditions on the lake. More than a dozen water quality parameters will be analyzed and a report produced by the end of the year. We will share the results with members when available.

And for those long-time Lake Watch members who may remember times in the past when we crossed swords with Alabama Power Company, the partnership described above is a whole lot more fun! It's a win-win situation for everyone. Thanks APCo!

Annual meeting coming up. The annual meeting held last year at the Elks Lodge on the lake was such a success that we'll likely hold it there again this year. We don't yet have a date but please be thinking of keeping open a Sunday in mid-October. I'll send out postcards when final arrangements are made.

Membership. It sounds like a broken record...but Lake Watch membership continues to stay solid at around 300. When you consider that we also represent the nearly 2000 members of HOBObOs on environmental matters, that's a pretty potent force. Many thanks again for your loyal support.

And for those who've been wondering if your dues are current, not to worry. Since I've been so tardy in getting this newsletter to you, your due dates have been adjusted accordingly on the enclosed renewal slip. [For those who in the past have given large donations, we consider you perpetual members. Of course, we always appreciate your continued donations!]

Lake Watch

of Lake Martin

Newsletter No. 42
1 November 2010
www.lakewatch.org

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Many of you have likely wondered why the long delay in receiving your newsletters. Rightly so and I apologize. No real excuse except that I seem to get better each day at putting things off. It has gotten to the point where I'm beginning to contemplate retiring. Not immediately...but certainly within the next year or so. More on that later.

Water Wars. As certain as death and taxes, the legal wrangles over sharing interstate waters between Georgia, Florida and Alabama are destined to continue far into the future. It's clear the issue will slowly wend its way through the courts and ultimately end up at the US Supreme Court. And no one will be satisfied with the outcome.

The decision last year by US District Judge Paul Magnuson seemed to get everyone's attention by threatening to drastically cut Atlanta's water supply withdrawal from Lake Lanier. His ruling gave the states three years to reach agreement and was initially seen by many as a much-needed wake-up call. However, there have been several attempts by Georgia to overturn all or parts of his ruling, but the three-year deadline still looms.

In the meantime, all three governors are lame duck and not likely to come to any substantial agreement before leaving office in January. The state of Georgia is at least making an effort to head off tough questions from future courts by enacting water conservation laws and planning new reservoirs, and they recently asked for more time to find appropriate solutions. Florida seems focused on protecting the endangered species in their river systems but has met with mixed success in the courts. And Alabama, in its normal fashion, still cannot get past powerful special interest groups to complete a statewide water resources management plan as mandated by the Water Resources Act of 1993. Maybe we need another drought (God forbid!) to get folks energized.

And speaking of droughts, the National Weather Service says the Lake Martin area is officially in a severe drought condition. While we had record-breaking rainfall last fall and winter, it still wasn't enough to fully re-charge the aquifers and now, with little rain for three months, we're beginning to feel the pinch.

Martin Dam re-licensing. We're well into the third year of the re-licensing process and are getting close to learning how the vision of stakeholders will fare. Lake Watch has been at the table since Day-1 and offered what we believe are good and reasonable recommendations for how the dam is operated during the next 30-40 years.

While some stakeholders may not get all they asked for, it appears that our collective voices were heard by Alabama Power Company (APCo) and the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC). In mid-September we received an update on 22 separate studies that were conducted as part of the re-licensing process. Last month we heard more about the process for deciding what will be in the final license request to FERC that must be submitted next summer.

The hottest topic in the re-licensing meetings is the rule curve (lake levels), especially during the fall, winter and spring months. There is general agreement that delaying the fall draw down, maintaining a higher winter pool, and starting the fill earlier in the spring could have a positive economic impact on the lake community because of an expected increase in recreational use. Simply put, a full lake has more appeal than one not so full.

Initially the call from some stakeholders was to reduce the normal 10-ft winter draw down to only 5-ft. While that may seem doable on paper, the seasonal low rainfall in the fall and winter makes it tough to keep water in the lake and still meet federal water release requirements for downstream purposes. And there are legitimate concerns from our downstream neighbors about spring floods from a fuller-than-normal lake as the spring rainy season approaches.

It's my guess that we're looking at an agreement to increase the winter pool between 3 to 4 feet, delay the fall draw down a couple of weeks, and begin the spring fill a bit earlier. APCo intends to submit their draft license application to FERC in January 2011, allow time for public comment, and complete the application process by June 2011.

Updated Lake Martin Report. Many of you will be pleased to learn that we're working on an update of the "*Lake Martin Report-2000*" that has served us so well. A decade ago when the Alabama Water Watch staff suggested a lake report, we had no idea how useful and popular it would be. We've used it for handouts to students, civic clubs, Chambers of Commerce, and for recruiting purposes.

But those of you who have looked at it lately know how outdated it is, especially in view of so many changes to major events around the lake...dam re-licensing, water wars, new water quality studies, and a whole lot of monitoring by many dedicated volunteers. The document re-write, "*Lake Martin Report-2011*", is underway through the leadership of Bill Deutsch and Eric Reutebuch of the AWW office. We're seeking a grant from the World Wildlife Fund to help fund the document. Completion time should be around the end of the year and we'll make sure all members get a copy.

Environmental Education. A few weeks ago we were asked to provide environmental education programs for gifted student classes at Radney School in Alexander City. These kids are highly motivated and are led by teacher Laurie Barrett who is always looking for interesting things for them to do.

Our plan is to conduct monthly programs throughout the school year for four classes of 5th & 6th graders using the three Alabama Water Watch (AWW) testing protocols of Chemistry (LaMotte test kit), Biology (*Living Streams*), and Bacteria (Coliscan test kits).

In September we introduced students to chemistry techniques and also conducted *Living Streams* programs at a small stream behind the school. Preliminary indications are that the stream is impaired, so now the students are in an investigative mode to determine the sources of pollution. That process is expected to continue for several months.

In October we began looking at bacteria and possible sources of water contamination. Since the Coliscan kit is designed to identify E. coli (considered a reliable indicator organism of fecal contamination), the students were asked to select several locations for testing. And it was here their imaginations kicked in...the list of test locations included the stream behind the school, two ponds at the Alexander City SportsPlex, drinking water fountains, door handles to school restrooms, and even commodes in their restrooms. Other possible bacteria tests include sampling what's on the noses of family pets and what's under kids' fingernails. Needless to say, the kids are really into this stuff!

So far we've had volunteers Tom & Pat Lynch help Mary Ann & me with the programs. But we could use more volunteers as the rest of the school year progresses. If you are interested, please call or email me.

Retirement. As mentioned above, my intent is to retire from the Lake Watch leadership position in the next year or so. The old clock is ticking and the organization really needs someone with more energy, fresh ideas and better organizational skills. My hope is that a new leadership team will take a look at several things:

- Revamp our water quality monitoring program (new sites, new monitors)
- Set up an electronic mailing and billing system
- Develop an email newsletter
- Make better use of our website and the water quality data we've collected
- Expand our environmental education program

The Lake Watch Board of Directors will form a nominating committee and provide a slate for consideration at the general membership meeting (normally held in the fall but now delayed until early 2011). My hope is that the board will find a person who will agree to serve as Vice President for a year and then step in with a seamless transition. Other vacancies to be filled are Secretary/Treasurer and several board positions, so if anyone is interested in serving, please let me know.

General membership meeting. As mentioned above, we'll slip the general membership meeting from this fall to early 2011 to prepare a slate of officers for elections. It will be held in the Elks Lodge on the lake, probably on a Sunday, and we'll send out notices.

Membership. Because I'm so late getting notices out to members, we'll adjust due dates accordingly as noted on the enclosed forms. So please bear with us as we develop a better system for tracking membership information. And for those who have kept track of due dates and already mailed in your checks, your future due dates will be adjusted also. Many thanks to our loyal members for sticking with us.

One more thing. If any of you are looking for an end-of-year tax write-off, we could use additional funds toward printing costs for the new "*Lake Martin Report-2011*". We're 501(c)(3) tax-exempt and I'll provide a statement for the IRS if requested.

> **Best wishes for the holiday season. See you at the membership meeting next year.**

Lake Watch

of Lake Martin

Newsletter No. 43
18 January 2011
www.lakewatch.org

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This will be a short newsletter to announce two important events: 1) the long-awaited special recognition of Lake Martin, and 2) the annual meeting. And if space allows, I'll provide a bit more information on happenings around the lake.

Treasured Alabama Lake designation. Three weeks ago Governor Bob Riley and other state dignitaries came to Lake Martin to announce a new program that recognizes special lakes and reservoirs in the state. During the ceremony the Governor signed Executive Order No. 52 that directed ADEM to develop the *Treasured Alabama Lake* program. In addition, he specified that Lake Martin would be the first to receive such recognition. During the event, both the Governor and ADEM Director Lance LeFleur singled out Lake Watch as being the catalyst to make this happen.

As many of you know, several years ago we began searching for a way to acknowledge the special qualities of the lake. We knew from our volunteer monitoring program and various studies that Lake Martin stood out from other lakes in water quality, beauty and recreational qualities. It was official recognition we sought.

In 2006 we submitted a formal request to ADEM that Lake Martin be considered for the classification of *Outstanding Alabama Water (OAW)*. However, the request was denied because Lake Martin lacked the natural characteristics of a free-flowing riverine system required for *OAW*. This denial prompted a rather testy series of letters and meetings with ADEM and a challenge that they develop a process wherein special lakes and reservoirs could be properly recognized. Obviously our pleas were heard.

During his remarks, the Governor described how the *Treasured Alabama Lake (TAL)* designation would protect Lake Martin for generations to come. Although the rules for the designation are still being written by ADEM, it's clear they will mirror those for *OAW* and will raise the bar for water quality by setting higher standards for current and future wastewater discharges into the watershed. The focus of the designation will be on protection of high quality waters rather than restoration.

Indications are that specific criteria for the *TAL* designation will include:

- waters of high quality
- waters of state parks and wildlife refuges
- waters of exceptional whole body water-contact recreational significance
- waters of exceptional water supply significance
- waters of rare or extraordinary ecological significance

For those who know Lake Martin, the lake will rate high in all categories. This will simply underscore the unique circumstances that formed the lake...geology, lack of industries, plenty of forested land, relatively few people, and good climate. And of course the many great stewards who understand how the lake drives the local economy.

So what's next? ADEM will begin the public comment period later this month and hold a public hearing in March. That should clear the way for approval by the Alabama Environmental Management Commission in April followed by a 35-day legislative review period (after which the rule becomes effective). Once the Attorney General has certified the rule it will be forwarded to the federal Environmental Protection Agency for final approval, likely by Fall 2011. Pretty complicated but well worth it.

During the signing ceremony I thanked Governor Riley and ADEM Director LeFleur for their leadership and support. And I paid special tribute to the many Lake Watch volunteers who gave so much time and effort to take the Alabama Water Watch training and conduct monthly monitoring, some for many years. According to records, nearly 1600 water quality data entries have been made to the AWW website since 1993 and that doesn't include more than 200 tests in support of three major water quality studies conducted by Auburn University and Lake Watch volunteers. During the past 18 years, more than 50 Lake Watch volunteers have been trained in the three AWW-approved water quality testing techniques of chemistry, biology and bacteria.

Of course, none of this would have happened without the great support of Alabama Water Watch. It was the knowledge and credibility gained from our partnership with AWW that gave us the confidence to dream big. And look where that got us!

To paraphrase the designation, many generations will enjoy the wonders of Alabama's Treasured Lake for many years to come. That name has a nice ring doesn't it?

For those interested in media coverage of the signing ceremony, see www.alabamawaterwatch.org, click on "Community Based Watershed Projects", and click on the highlighted story about Lake Watch.

Annual Lake Watch meeting. As mentioned in the last newsletter, our general membership meeting will be held a bit later than normal to accommodate some business requirements (elections) and discuss plans for the future.

We'll meet on **Sunday 20 February 2011** at the Alexander City Elks Lodge on Lake Martin. Lunch (free) begins at **12:30** and includes a business meeting to elect board members and new officers.

Following the business meeting we'll hear an update from Alabama Power Company on possible lake level increases through the re-licensing process. We'll also get a status report from ADEM on the *Treasured Alabama Lake* program.

We invite all members of the Lake Watch family and their neighbors to attend. We need to know how many are coming so we can make necessary catering arrangements, so **please** call (256) 825-9353 or email at dbronson@charter.net.

- o Directions to Elks Lodge: From Highway 280 just ¼-mile west of the Tallapoosa River Bridge, take Elks Parkway south for 1-mile to the lodge.

Ok, I have some space to fill so here goes with more news.

Membership. The response from the last newsletter was great...we still maintain our numbers at 300+ and that's fine for an organization that doesn't do membership drives. Many of you sent in renewals well into 2012 and our treasury remains in the comfort zone. Many thanks for your loyalty and response.

Officers and Board Members. For those who attend our general membership meeting on 20 February 2011, we'll have a great slate of officers and board members to elect. I think you will be pleased with our plans for the future and especially with the person who will take charge after I retire. Nope...no advance word on a name...that surprise is saved for the meeting.

Environmental Education. The previous newsletter told of our environmental education program at Alex City's Radney School. Things are going well and we have plans to continue the program into the 2011-2012 school year. Teacher **Laurie Barrett** will attend the general membership meeting and say a few words about her views on the program. We'll also recruit more volunteers to help out.

New T-shirts. We're working on a new design for Lake Watch T-shirts that will show (what else would you expect?!)...*Alabama's Treasured Lake*. We may have some samples for consideration at the annual meeting.

➤ SEE YOU AT THE MEETING ON SUNDAY 20 FEBRUARY

------(cut here)-----

REMINDER: Lake Watch general membership meeting **Sunday 20 February 2011** at **12:30**, Elks Lodge. Please RSVP: (256) 825-9353 or dbronson@charter.net.

X

(refrigerator magnet goes here)

Lake Watch

of Lake Martin

Newsletter No. 44
16g July 2011
www.lakewatch.org

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I've waited for the completion of several events before doing this newsletter: final approval of the *Treasured Alabama Lake* designation, completion of the Martin Dam relicensing process, a loooong flight to visit old friends in Korea, and to wait for things to settle down after tornados tore through the state on 27 April.

Storms: The tornados that hit Alabama, especially the one that clobbered areas on the lake, were devastating. The following morning Mary Ann & I ventured out in our boat to take a look, going from one end of the lake to the other. There were few boats on the water because residents in the path were still in shock and for good reason. We've all seen pictures of storm damage but it pales when one sees it up close and personal.

Entire homes swept away...gone except for the debris that was everywhere. People standing around with the proverbial "thousand-yard stare" trying to grasp what had just happened. Our home dodged a bullet when the storm passed 3-miles south of us but the evening of the storm is etched in our memory.

Treasured Alabama Lake. It's now official...during their April 2011 meeting the Environmental Management Commission (EMC) approved the new designation of *Treasured Alabama Lake (TAL)* and selected Lake Martin as the first recipient. In the same action, the EMC approved the classification of *Outstanding Alabama Water (OAW)* for a 30-mile segment of the Tallapoosa River from Cane Creek in Cleburne County to the Georgia state line.

This culminates 5 years of effort to get official recognition of the clean waters of Lake Martin. Anyone familiar with the lake knows that it ranks among the cleanest in the southeastern United States, and the *TAL* designation simply puts the state's stamp of approval on what we already knew.

The two actions by the EMC have some important implications and not just for those who love Lake Martin but for the state. Certainly having the lake designated as the first *Treasured Alabama Lake* gives us bragging rights for being associated with an extraordinarily clean lake...but it goes beyond that. In the words of former Governor Bob Riley when he signed the Executive Order in December, this will provide a level of protection to the lake for generations to come. It does not unduly restrict development around the lake but does require stronger environmental considerations in the future. And both the *TAL* and *OAW* criteria provide a buffer on the Tallapoosa River and a new bargaining chip in the never-ending water wars by establishing tougher water quality standards for discharges into our upstream waters that begin in Georgia.

And while I'm on the topic of *Treasured Alabama Lake*, we have a brand new Lake Watch T-shirt available for sale that has a nice lake scene on the back and the words,

“Lake Martin—Alabama’s Treasure”. For more information on shirts and hats, contact Secretary Pat Lynch at (256) 825-5998 or email her at pal1941@aol.com.

Martin Dam Re-licensing. In early June Alabama Power Company (APCo) forwarded their application for a new license to the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC), thus ending 4 years of meetings, comments and letters. It will likely be another 2 years before FERC completes their review (including a public comment period) and issues a final decision.

As anticipated, the application provides for an increase of 3-feet in the winter pool (a 7-ft fall-winter drop instead of the current 10-ft drop) and provisions for a 45-day extension of the summer pool into the fall provided sufficient water is available. From my personal perspective, this increase is pretty much what I had hoped for when the process began.

However, not all stakeholders share that opinion. Some would have preferred a higher winter pool level (up to a 5-ft increase) while others are not happy with the way APCo made the decision. My take on it is that, while the process was a bit flawed, the end result is what counts. And since I’m more of a “results person” than a “process person”, I’m satisfied with the result. My hat’s off to Jim Crew, APCo’s Re-Licensing Manager, who is much better at herding cats than I thought possible.

Water Wars...again! Some of you will recall the 2009 ruling by Judge Magnuson that set a very tough 3-year deadline for Atlanta to find a solution in the dispute over shared waters between Georgia, Florida and Alabama. I doubt there were many who believed his ruling would stand...and it didn’t as of a couple of weeks ago when the 11th Circuit Court of Appeals threw out the ruling and, in effect, started the war all over again. It now appears the US Army Corps of Engineers has the responsibility of determining how much water Georgia can take from rivers that also go to neighboring states.

If nothing else, this should be another wake-up call to the State of Alabama to develop a long-mandated statewide Water Resources Management Plan. Unfortunately, there are special interest groups who will continue to fight any attempt to get our act together. And as stated in previous newsletters, this won’t be resolved anytime soon. Alabama Governor Bentley intends to appeal the ruling to the full Appeals Court, and there are other related lawsuits still not settled. So as before, stay tuned but don’t hold your breath.

Environmental education project. Last year when we agreed to provide a program to the 5th & 6th grade gifted classes at Radney School in Alexander City, little did we know it would develop into a project that now is entering its second year with no end in sight. And what a great project it is...probably the best Lake Watch has done.

Volunteers from Lake Watch and staff members from Alabama Water Watch (funded by grants from our treasury) conducted monthly classes between September 2010 and May 2011, providing hundreds of contact hours teaching kids about water resources around the world. This coming year the curriculum will be even better.

Beginning in September 2011 we'll explore a variety of topics including watersheds, the AWW water-testing techniques of chemical, biological and bacterial, we'll discuss new ways to determine water quality (photography, hyperspectral and remote sensing), we might try an electro-shock demo at a nearby pond, we hope to observe a fish spawning event at a local stream, and we're working on a long-term stream restoration project to address pollution problems in the small stream behind the school. The kids will also travel to Dauphin Island to learn how water that flows into the Mobile Bay watershed (some of it from Lake Martin) affects the ecosystem there.

And finally we'll take the kids to one of the more awesome places around...Ben Russell's mill site on Elkahatchee Creek. Several years ago he purchased the land where the century-old Holloway gristmill once stood and has restored the dam, erected several buildings, and re-created the mill building to include one of the tallest waterwheels in the nation. The site is a geological wonder with cascading water over bare rocks, deep pools and fast water that comes from a very clean watershed...a wonderful place for conducting *Living Streams* programs. Ben has agreed that we can take the kids there on a selected request basis to learn about clean water, to see the wonderful geology, and to learn some important history about the area. Wow, what an opportunity for the kids!

Board meeting. The Lake Watch board of directors met at the Dadeville Presbyterian Church on 8 November 2010. The topic of discussion was the organization's future direction and to prepare a slate for elections at the annual meeting. There was unanimous agreement that Lake Watch had established itself as the leading environmental voice for the lake and would remain so as reflected in the elections (see below).

Annual Lake Watch meeting. Approximately 50 members gathered for an excellent meeting at the Elks Lodge on Sunday 20 February 2011. The agenda was as follows.

- Treasurer's report showed a balance of \$5722.29.
- Jim Crew (APCo) gave an update on dam re-licensing.
- A short update on *Treasured Alabama Lake* was given.
- Several of teacher Laurie Barrett's students (Precious Kufarimai, Mason Sake and Cambron Bice) described what they had learned in their environmental classes.
- Election results:
 - Dick Bronson agreed to remain as President for another year.
 - Tom Collier stepped down as Vice President and was elected to the board.
 - Eric Reutebuch was elected as a board member and as Vice President.
 - Pat Lynch was elected as Secretary.
 - Tom Lynch was elected as Treasurer.
 - Matt Campbell, Dick Duncan, John Durr and Dave Heinzen were re-elected to the board of directors.

State of Our Watershed Conference. Although we were in Korea at the time, the word is that it was a great meeting on 22 June with over 80 people in attendance. Topics included discussions about the positive impact of the *Treasured Alabama Lake* designation, a wrap-up of the re-licensing package sent to FERC, and a fine presentation about a variety of environmental education projects by teacher Laurie Barrett and two of

her students (Mason Sake and Dakota Tate). This was the 7th annual Tallapoosa River Watershed conference and plans are already underway for next year.

Spin-off. As a result of the Lake Watch connection to Radney School, the gifted class teacher and students are now doing monthly monitoring at the Alexander City boat ramp off Coley Creek Road. This is an important location to test water quality because it lies midway between a wastewater treatment plant and the drinking water intake at the Adams Filter Plant at the Highway 280 River Bridge.

Another nice spin-off is that we are “growing” a whole new generation of citizens who are interested in our natural resources and are willing to take action to protect them.

In memoriam. Leon Runnells died in February. He was one of our founding members, he attended every meeting he could, and he would call at least three times a year to ask if his membership was past due. It never was. His wonderful sense of humor and his unique “country” sayings will be missed.

Membership. As always, our membership remains pretty constant...some 300 members. Your dedication and loyalty is encouraging and greatly appreciated. Please note the due dates on the enclosed membership slips. And if anyone wants to provide additional funding so AWW staff members can help us with environmental education programs, your contributions are tax-deductible. Many thanks!

Lake Watch of Lake Martin
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Lake Watch

of Lake Martin

Newsletter No. 45
20 December 2011
www.lakewatch.org

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Another year gone by and time to reflect on the wonderful season of Christmas and to prepare for another great year. And being fortunate enough to live on beautiful Lake Martin certainly helps put things into perspective.

This will be short since most of the major news items were in the last newsletter, to wit:

- 1) Lake Martin is officially designated a “*Treasured Alabama Lake*”;
- 2) The Martin Dam relicensing process is now pretty much in the hands of the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission,
- 3) The Water Wars are still with us, and
- 4) We’re into local environmental education programs in a big way (more on this below).

Environmental education

Radney School. We’re halfway through our second year of environmental education programs for the 5th & 6th grade gifted classes. Tom & Pat Lynch have been a great help with programs on chemistry and teaching the use of the LaMotte test kit. Tom is a retired chemist so it’s pretty easy for him and Pat is a natural-born teacher. Twice this summer a dozen or so kids boarded the Lynch & Bronson boats to do water testing near the city boat ramp off Coley Creek Road and several students have since traveled via car to conduct monthly tests from the floating dock. Teacher Laurie Barrett was recently re-certified as a water quality monitor and she now enters the test data on the Alabama Water Watch website.

We just returned from accompanying 32 Radney kids to the Dauphin Island Sea Lab for an overnight field trip to learn first-hand how Mobile Bay is impacted by pollution and land use practices upstream in the watershed. It was an excellent teaching experience for all, including a trip to the bay on a research vessel to monitor water quality with a Hydro-lab sampling device and to collect aquatic life (sting rays, shrimp, jellyfish, plankton and small fish). They also took a beach walk at night, explored a salt marsh, and conducted squid dissections in the lab. Quite a trip!

Plans for the remainder of the 2011-2012 school year include a demonstration of electro-shocking of fish, observe a fish spawning event in a local stream, a presentation on water quality issues in other countries by Dr. Bill Deutsch & Sergio Ruiz-Cordova, a presentation on the techniques of outdoor photography, a presentation by John Glasier on the use of satellite imagery to help assess water quality, and a trip to Ben Russell’s Grist Mill on Elkahatchee Creek to conduct a *Living Streams* event.

Gardens at Stephens School. This past summer we were asked to find someone to help refurbish eight raised flower & vegetable garden beds at Stephens School in Alexander City. We located two people (Kathy Nicholson & Billy Walls) who had just completed the Master Gardener program and they are volunteering their time to the 3rd & 4th grade gifted classes...and the Bronsons are adding their limited expertise.

Even though it wasn't the traditional planting season this fall, they still got a good harvest of radishes, kale, squash, zucchini and even a couple of small pumpkins. The real gardening time will begin next spring when the kids test the soil for nitrogen, phosphorus, potassium and pH, apply fertilizer if necessary, and see the fruits of their labor.

On a humorous note, one day Mary Ann showed the kids a small bag of "donut seeds" and suggested they plant them so they could harvest fresh donuts. The kids quickly recognized the seeds as Cheerios but planted them anyway to humor us. A few days later she took in her harvest of Little Debby donuts. Of course they ate them but were still skeptical until they looked out the window and saw two small "trees" with donuts hanging by strings. They stampeded outside, picked the trees bare and began asking questions about how it all happened. One little girl asked if there would be repeat harvests so I guess we're committed to occasional donut treats.

Board of Directors meeting. The Board met at the home of Matt & Ann Campbell on 17 November 2011 and considered the following agenda items.

- Treasurer report: balance \$6126.85.
- Approved a donation of \$1000 to Alabama Water Watch (more below).
- Approved 19 February 2012 for the annual meeting (more below).
- President Dick Bronson set the 2013 annual meeting as his time-certain date to retire. This will allow time for Vice President Eric Reutebuch to prepare for the transition and the Board to search for his successor.
- Membership dues were originally established in the By-laws nearly 20 years ago and, according to the rules, can only be changed by a vote at an annual meeting. The Board agreed that dues are in need of revision and more flexibility is needed, so the following amendment to Article IV, Section 2 of the By-laws will be presented for a vote of approval at the annual meeting: ***"Members shall be required to pay dues in an amount determined by the Board of Directors."*** We'll also have a discussion of how to simplify the dates for members' dues.

Annual meeting. The 20th annual Lake Watch meeting will be held at the Elks Lodge on Lake Martin on **Sunday 19 February 2012**. Registration & sign-in begins at **12:30** and a buffet lunch will be served at 1:00. There will be no charge for lunch.

Following the meal we'll have a short business meeting to amend the By-laws and vote for officers and board members. We'll then have a program that will include comments by Dr. Bill Deutsch entitled, *"The Spiritual Aspects of Water Around the World."* You won't want to miss his comments nor those of Laurie Barrett when she provides an update on environmental education programs in local schools.

Please join us on 19 February and bring a friend or two. We'll need an accurate head-count for the caterers so please **RSVP to (256) 825-9353 or (256) 825-5998 NLT 12 February 2012**. Thanks.

Funding cuts to Alabama Water Watch. Recently it was learned that a reduction of federal EPA funding to the states for outreach programs like Alabama Water Watch (AWW) caused the Alabama Department of Environmental Management to eliminate all funding to AWW for this fiscal year. The cuts were made half-way through the fiscal year, making the impact even more severe. While there is hope that some funding may be restored in future years, there is an immediate need to off-set the loss of funds for basic support of volunteer efforts of volunteer groups around the state.

Lake Watch has greatly benefited from our association with Alabama Water Watch since we were organized 20 years ago. They trained our volunteers, they conducted studies of our lake, they conducted school programs, they provided the scientific backstop for us, and frankly, they are the reason Lake Watch has been so effective in protecting Lake Martin. Put another way, **Lake Watch would likely not exist without Alabama Water Watch.** That's the reason for the \$1000 contribution mentioned above. Other environmental groups statewide are helping in a similar way.

Recently I sent out a personal plea for funding assistance for AWW and the response has been impressive so far. However, there is still a great need for people to join in helping AWW maintain its presence in the state, so if any Lake Watch members are willing to help, you can send your deductible end-of-tax-year contributions to:

Alabama Water Watch
250 Upchurch Hall
Auburn University, AL 36849-5419

Many thanks for your generosity!

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**Membership.** Enclosed are the usual membership slips for those whose due dates are coming up within the next 6 months. We've used this rather antiquated "system" for many years and, while it has worked reasonably well, it's clear we must develop a better way of letting members know their due dates.

This is something the Board is looking at and will likely involve using email. Many of you have provided your email addresses in the past and we'll be working on getting our list up to date. In the meantime, we sincerely appreciate your loyalty.

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One final note. In addition to reflecting on our many blessings, especially during this time of year, please remember those Lake Watch members who are no longer with us. And send up a special prayer for **Roberta Klass** who is fighting a serious illness. She and Larry are among the original members of Lake Watch.

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>>> See you at the annual meeting on 19 February 2012. <<<

**Merry Christmas!**



# Lake Watch

of Lake Martin

Newsletter No. 46  
22 June 2012  
www.lakewatch.org

Dick Bronson, President  
(256) 825-9353  
dbronson@charter.net

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This will be short...the purpose is to send out the new Lake Watch publication.

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**Lake Watch Publication-2012.** It's a great sequel to the one done in 2000 with twice the pages (32vs16) and plenty of updated information. The publication is the culmination of many long hours of hard work by Eric Reutebuch at Alabama Water Watch (and Vice President of Lake Watch). A portion of the printing costs were provided by a grant from the World Wildlife Fund, some from the Lake Martin Resource Association who purchased 1000 copies, and the remainder from membership dues.

We believe the publication will be useful to those who want to learn more about Lake Martin and its watershed. It's a great resource for educational purposes and should be popular to people who are considering locating to the lake. For those who want it to recruit new Lake Watch members, call me and I'll get you additional copies.

Special thanks to the following people who helped Eric with the content: John Glasier who edited the technical data, Dr. Kathryn Braund who authored the section on Native Americans, Dr. Pat O'Neil who provided much of the information on fishes and critters, and Jim Crew who authored the information about dam re-licensing. My limited participation was to help with editing...so if you find errors, please don't tell me.

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**Annual meeting.** The Lake Watch 20th annual meeting was held at the Elks Lodge on Sunday 19 February 2012 and it was a resounding success. Attendance was well over 50, and many were my family members who came to participate in a surprise award ceremony. The staff at Alabama Water Watch recommended me for the *W. Kelly Mosley* environmental award and Dr. David Rouse, Chairman of the Auburn Department of Fisheries and Allied Aquaculture, presented me with a beautiful framed & limited edition of a painting by William Baggett (a well-known former art professor at Auburn University) along with a certificate, a plaque and a \$500 cash award. Actually I knew something was up when I walked into the room and saw several of my grand-children from Dallas, Atlanta and Montgomery, but I was and still am blown away by the honor. The cash award has been split between the Radney School environmental program and Alabama Water Watch. The painting hangs in our living room.

**By-laws.** The members in attendance unanimously approved a change to the Lake Watch by-laws to wit: "*Members shall be required to pay dues in an amount determined by the Board of Directors*" in order to more easily adjust membership dues. The board will meet to discuss a slight increase in membership dues and notification will be provided in accordance with the information in the last paragraph of this newsletter.

**Radney kids.** Attendees enjoyed a presentation by Teacher Laurie Barrett and three of her students (Taylor Latham, Shelby Bloodworth, and John Brooks Williams) who did a nice job narrating photographs taken during various environmental education events supported by Lake Watch and Alabama Water Watch the past two years.

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**Environmental education.** We've completed our second year working with the gifted students at Radney Elementary School in Alexander City and it's been even better than the first year. Frankly, we've spent much more time doing programs with the kids than first anticipated...but in my opinion it's been well worth it. While we have no way to accurately gauge the impact on learning, all of the volunteers involved sincerely believe that it is making a difference in how the students look at the world they live in now and will take care of in the future. Without question, the students we know who are moving on to Middle School will be good stewards of their environment...and isn't that what it's all about anyway?

**Outdoor education.** This summer and fall will be busy helping students at Radney School with environmental projects. Through grants from the Middle Tallapoosa Clean Water Partnership and the Coosa Valley Resource Conservation & Development Council, several "learning stations" with simple benches will be scattered through the woods behind the school. The nature trail that students completed last year from Radney to the SportPlex will be improved with directional signs. Two small bridges will be constructed by Eagle Scout candidates and other volunteers along with picnic tables w/attached seats. Interpretative signage will be placed at appropriate locations for aquatic critters, wildlife habitat, geological formations, tree identification, and special flora & fauna.

All teachers at Radney are being encouraged to take their students outdoors for classes, whether math, history, language, geography or to simply to sit on benches and reflect. Lake Watch has offered to escort teachers into the woods for their first few visits so they are comfortable with the surroundings.

We could use some volunteers to help in the woods this summer. No skills are required except to enjoy working with kids and not be concerned about poison ivy, mosquitoes or yellow jackets. Give me a call if you can help.

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Membership dues.

- Beginning 1 December 2012, dues will be payable by 1 January 2013 and on the first day of each subsequent year.
- Reminders will be sent to members no later than 1 December of each year.
- If your current due date is June through November 2012, please wait until December to make your payment.
- Dues for new members will follow the same schedule and will be pro-rated to ensure everyone gets at least a full year credit.
- Prior to 1 December 2012 the Board of Directors will determine changes to annual dues and they will be announced in the reminder mentioned above.
- FYI, our treasury stands at just over \$4000. We're still in the comfort zone for funds, even with final printing costs for the new publication yet to be paid, and we anticipate a modest increase once the new dues structure is in place.

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**As always, many thanks for your loyalty to Lake Watch.**  
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