

LAKE WATCHER

The Newsletter of Lake Watch of Lake Martin

No. 50, January 2015

Lake Watch Annual Meeting Set for February 8, 2015

The Lake Watch Annual Meeting will be **Sunday, February 8, 2015, noon to 2:30 pm** at the **StillWaters Residential Association Centre** inside StillWaters Resort (1816 StillWaters Drive, Dadeville, AL; map and directions below). The meal will be catered and we ask that you pre-register so that we have a good count in order to accurately order food.

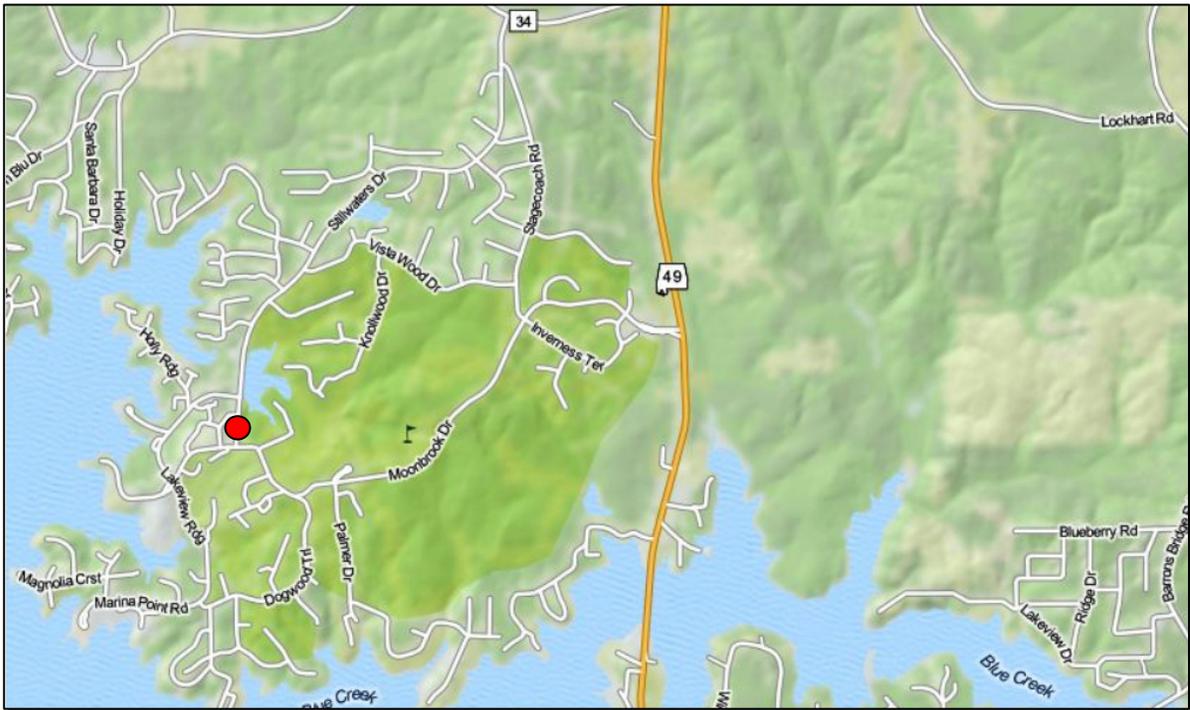
Also, the Board has asked that everyone donate a nominal fee of \$7.50 per person to cover the cost of our catfish dinner so that our dues and donations are used for water quality and watershed stewardship purposes. To pre-register, go to www.lakewatch.org. Click the **Events** menu on the left side of the homepage, then click the **Register** button. You may send your luncheon payment with your dues or pay at the meeting but please do take the time to preregister for the meeting. Or, if you prefer, send an e-mail to us at membership@lakewatch.org to let us know that you plan to attend.

Eve Brantley, Water Resources Extension Specialist with the Alabama Cooperative Extension System (ACES), is this year's guest speaker. She will discuss *Low Impact Development/Smart Yards* and how all lakefront owners and property owners within the Lake Martin Watershed can minimize impacts to our Treasured Lake. Eve is a dynamic and motivational speaker who has a wealth of experience in low impact development (LID), best management practices and watershed management. She was the State Coordinator with Georgia Adopt-A-Stream, served as Watershed Project Coordinator at Weeks Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve and currently is an Associate Professor and Water Resources Extension Specialist with Auburn University's Department of Crop, Soil and Environmental Science.

We have three board positions up for election this year. Matt Campbell will stand for reelection and the Nominating Committee has presented two nominations for other vacancies: Dave Hagan and George Zorn. Judy Palfrey will serve as the new Volunteer Monitor Coordinator.

Directions to the StillWaters Residential Association Building: From Hwy 49, south of the Hwy 49- CR 34 intersection, turn into StillWaters onto Moonbrook Drive,

- Take Moonbrook Drive to StillWaters Drive,
- Turn right on StillWaters Drive, the StillWaters Residential Association Building will be on your left (see red dot on map):



Our Year in Review by Kathryn Braund, Lake Watch President

Lake Watch members have been busy over the past year. Our certified water quality monitors continue to monitor 15 sites monthly and report results to Alabama Water Watch's database. We were happy to welcome two new active volunteers who have now completed their training and will soon begin water testing on Lake Martin. In addition, our volunteers have worked on educational project designed with local children, including the Living Streams program. Lake Watch is a member of the Middle Tallapoosa River Basin Clean Water Partnership and we have worked with the Lake Martin Home and Boat Owners Association on a variety of local issues.

The most pressing issue we confronted this year was a request by Constellation Energy Regeneration LLC (CER) to modify the wastewater discharge permit for their plant in Alexander City. CER currently trucks discharge water from their generation plant to the Alex City wastewater treatment plant. The modification would allow the company to dispense with trucking their waste water and dump it directly into Oaktasasi Creek, which flows into Lake Martin. Wastewater from the plant is known to contain, among other things, Chlorine, Antimony, Arsenic, Chromium, Mercury, Lead and Selenium. Lake Watch strongly opposes this permit modification and notified the Alabama Department of Environmental Management of our opposition to the permit modification on May 1, 2014. At that time, we requested a public hearing on the matter.

A public hearing was held on October 7, 2014, at Alexander City's City Hall. Lake Watch members, including President Kathryn Braund and Past President Dick Bronson, spoke against the permit modification. In all, nine of fourteen speakers at the hearing opposed the permit modification, including representatives of the HOBOS, LMRA, Russell Lands, and the city of Alex City. As of early December, ADEM has not ruled on the permit modification. CER is owned by the Chicago-

based Exelon Generation Corporation. They seek the permit modification to save \$600,000 annually in operating costs.

In 2013, we supported the effort to have the winter water pool levels raised—an issue still not resolved. But we remain hopeful that the voice of so many concerned citizens on that issue will lead to wider recognition of the need to protect our “Treasured Alabama Lake.”

As we continue to monitor the local watershed and speak out on issues that would impact water quality, we continue to seek your support through your dues and your help with our organization. We are always eager for active volunteers. If you are interested in helping with meetings, the newsletter, our website or our Face Book page, or other activities or wish to become a volunteer water monitor, please contact us at info@lakewatch.org.

Be sure to check out our website (access at <http://lakewatch.org>). Our site allows members to renew their dues, make donations, update their contact information, as well as access information about our organization, including news of interest to members. You can also keep up with us on Facebook. Be sure and “like” our page and keep up with news of members and articles of interest. Feel free to post your lake photos and items on interest on the page.

SPECIAL THANKS to Ann Campbell

Ann Campbell, who has served as our Volunteer Monitor Coordinator, is stepping down after four years of service. She has worked to make sure all our volunteer monitors were AWW-certified and is herself an AWW Trainer of monitors.



Ann and Matt Campbell hosting an AWW bacteriological workshop at their home on the lake.

To keep current, she has attended AWW trainer workshops, conducted workshops to train others, and has worked tirelessly to make sure all our monitors have proper and up-to-date supplies and chemicals for testing. She has worked with Alabama Water Watch/Auburn University on special projects, including bacteriological monitoring and water quality of several local streams. She has also been active in supporting water quality issues at city council meetings in the area, visiting

technicians at water treatment facilities, recruiting volunteers, and educating the public about what we do. The most rewarding thing about her work with Lake Watch? Ann simply said "meeting many, many lovely people has been the best part." Many thanks to Ann for her tireless service!

501(c)3 – What’s it all about?

Laurel Goldsmith, Lake Watch Treasurer

Do you know that Lake Watch has tax-exempt nonprofit status under the category 501(c) (3)? Thanks to the selfless efforts of our resident legal expert, Matt Campbell, our Lake Watch 501(c)3 status has been updated! Do you know what that means for you? You can write off your Lake Watch dues and any donations you make to support Lake Watch, as long as you do not receive any goods or services in exchange for the payment. Your support of Lake Watch pays for monitoring our beautiful Treasured Lake, the only one there is in the state of Alabama – thanks to efforts of Lake Watch members!

Martin Dam Relicensing

Dick Bronson, Lake Watch Board member, LW founder and former long-time President

We are still awaiting a decision from the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission on Alabama Power Company’s request for changes to the lake rule curve. The major changes would be to increase the winter pool level by three feet and extend the summer pool level further into the fall, depending on water availability. This would provide an opportunity for boaters to get on the lake later in the year when the weather is picture-perfect. My personal belief is that FERC will approve the request and we’ll begin seeing modest changes in lake levels in a year or so. I hope so.

But I’ve also shared my personal belief that, in the event FERC denies the request, it won’t truly affect life on the lake as we know it. We’ll still enjoy the enormous privilege of living on the cleanest and best lake in the state, regardless of winter pool levels.

Update on Lake Watch Water Quality Monitoring

Ann Campbell, Lake Watch Water Monitoring Trainer and Coordinator

In addition to the listed sites, the Bronsons and the De Pasquales and kids have done bacterial monitoring and stream monitoring in conjunction with Radney School and with other school programs at Camp ASCCA this year. Dick is also working toward involving some of the teachers in Dadeville in an exploration of Lake Watch protocols in hopes of getting them to develop community interest toward environmental education via their classrooms. We had multiple features in *Lake Magazine* written by Dick Bronson and Ann Campbell to promote awareness of Lake Watch of Lake Martin.

This year we added to our group of monitors: Jim & Shellie Bearrentine, Judy Palfrey, Heather Williams, Mike Guillot, Dave Hagan, JoAnne and David Hawk, Myrna and Chuck Lehman, and Rosa Ann Coleman. Our two heroes of the year are Judy Palfrey and Heather Williams. That team

has added 5 new sites to those actively monitored. Dave Hagan is currently certified for bacterial and plans to certify for chemistry in the coming year.

Water chemistry monitors test and report air and water temperature, pH, dissolved oxygen content, alkalinity, hardness & turbidity. Bacteriological monitors report air and water temps, *E.coli* and other coliform colonies. Both types of testing are to be made directly from the water body, Chemistry from approx 6-12" depth, Bacterial from 2-3 inches below the water surface. Alabama Water Watch at Auburn University receives data from individual volunteers and maintains computer records for each site.

Here's an overview of the nuts and bolts of expenses to keep our monitoring program operating:

Water Chemistry Monitoring:

Primary supplier is LaMotte. Current method is to order chemicals on a quarterly basis as needed to save on shipping costs, but monitors often request special orders.

- Full kit including glassware, thermometer 9844-0: \$280.00
- Secchi disk & line with weight from Ben Meadows: \$50
- Full kit chem refill: \$90.80
- Remote sampler made by a local plastics manufacturer for AWW: \$55
- Individual chemical refills for each kit has an annual cost of approximately \$100 plus tax and shipping.

Bacteriological Monitoring:

Primary supplier is Micrology Labs.

Estimated cost to equip an active bacterial monitor for the season (May – Sept), five months, for one site is approximately \$50 plus tax and shipping. In accordance with the guidelines set out by ADEM, Lake Watch of Lake Martin, along with other water monitoring groups in the state, takes a sabbatical on bacterial monitoring beginning in October and returning to our regular monthly routine in May.



Dick Bronson, Lake Watch, joins Eric Reutebuch and Daniel (grad student) from AU to sample water at Wind Creek State Park swim beach over the summer. Ann Campbell and Judy Palfrey also assisted. The study was made possible through collaboration with Wind Creek.

The Coliscan Easygel growth medium must be kept frozen until sampling time. The bacterial testing requires that the monitor use an incubator to grow bacteria in sample petri dishes and report results to AWW. An incubator can be easily made by the monitor with an inexpensive ice chest/cooler, night light and thermometer.

All these costs are at current year prices which, in past experience, go up a bit each year.

Currently monitored sites:

(*indicates that bacterial monitoring is done in addition to chemical data collection)

Horseshoe Bend National Military Park boat ramp – Palfrey/Williams

Elks Lodge - recently retired by Lynches

Bay Pine Island – Dick & Mary Ann Bronson

Camp Alamisco – Tom & Tommie Ford

Kowaliga (Elmore Co) – Diana & David French

City boat ramp s of Coley Creek Road – Laurie Barrett

Smith Landing (off Old Suzanna Road) – Palfrey/Williams

Lake Martin dock near StillWaters - Kathryn Braund

Raintree Sugar Creek – Larry Lock’s dock – seeking a new monitor

Lake Martin dock near Lake View Road - George Zorn

Lake Martin at Barron's Bridge Coleman/Lehman (at high water)

Lake Martin SWYC Clubhouse Coleman/Lehman (year ‘round)

*Lake Martin at the Coley Creek Embayment – Campbells

*Coley Creek above Paul Satterfield Bridge – Campbells

Newly active sites this year:

*Lake Martin at Wind Creek Swim Beach – Campbells, Eric Reutebuch and AU students

*Lake Martin off Hwy 49 at Blue Creek – Dave Hagan

*Lake Martin at The Ridge Marina – Mike Guillot

Lake Martin south of Coopers Creek off Blue Creek Channel–Jim & Shellie Bearrentine

Judy Palfrey & Heather Williams added 5 sites listed below (awesome!):

*Lake Martin at Pace’s Point Trail

*Lake Martin at Dare Park swimming beach

*Buck Creek at Freeman Drive

*Dadeville High School creek near tennis courts Chattasofka tributary

*Buck Creek past waterworks holding station, W. Lafayette Street in Dadeville

Bottom Line:

Current monitors are adding to their certification repertoires, and new volunteers are coming onto our Lake Watch team. If you want to get in on the fun of monitoring our Treasured Lake and its tributaries, go to the Alabama Water Watch website www.alabamawaterwatch.org and get signed up for a workshop for water chemistry or bacteriological or steam monitoring, or better yet, all three! Once you’ve got your certificate in hand, get to the Lake Watch of Lake Martin website www.lakewatch.org to contact our volunteer coordinator to make arrangements to select a site(s) of your preference and order supplies for you. Then once your site information is submitted to and

confirmed by AWW, you'll be set up for data input access to the AWW website, and you'll be ready to go! I guarantee that you'll get that warm, fuzzy feeling inside – knowing that you are doing your part in protecting Lake Martin for all to enjoy!

Environmental Education in the Lake Martin Watershed

Dick Bronson, Lake Watch Board member, LW founder and former long-time President

Lake Watch continues teaching the youth in the lake area about environmental topics, and recently expanded into two other schools. Our primary focus continues in support of the Gifted Student program at Radney and Stephens Schools in Alex City. We're now in our fifth year at both schools and have provided an excellent array of programs, including *Living Streams* events, classes on the importance of watersheds and water quality, hikes and trail maintenance on Trillium Trail behind Radney School, gardening, water quality testing, field trips, guest speakers including Bill Deutsch, Eve Brantley, David Cline, Eric Reutebuch, Sergio Ruiz-Cordova, Mona Dominguez, and Wendy Seesock (all from Auburn University), Pat O'Neil (University of Alabama), Doug Darr (Alabama DCNR), and Lance Lefleur (ADEM Director). Virtually all programs have an outdoor aspect and we get excellent cooperation from both schools.



Dick Bronson and Eric Reutebuch work with Laurie Barrett at Radney School teaching students how to monitor for E. coli bacteria.

We've been blessed with outstanding Lake Watch volunteers to help...Mary Ann, Tom & Pat Lynch, and Zelma & Raymond dePasquale. The Lynchs recently moved out of state and we could use more volunteers. It doesn't take a lot of time...maybe 4-5 hours a month...and we're pretty flexible on scheduling programs to meet needs of volunteers. And for sure, you don't need a degree in environmental science to help. Simply enjoy helping young people understand the wonderful universe around us.

During the past year we've expanded programs into Alex City's Benjamin Russell High School and into Dadeville Elementary School. The BRHS initiative involves a teacher and several students who commit to adopting a local stream, conduct monthly water quality monitoring, and present

their results the following year to a committee at Auburn University. This is called the *Stream Team Program* and combines the talents of AU's Forestry Department and Alabama Water Watch to train students, equip them with necessary testing equipment, and assist them as necessary. Lake Watch volunteers will work with the teacher and students as they progress in their efforts.

The program is designed to continue with new students every year, and they will compete with other area high school students for recognition, including possible scholarships. Currently we're working with Coach Rick Jones and two of his students Denzel Stinson

Stewart Ward and they have adopted the Coley Creek area for testing with both chemical and bacteria kits. The hope is to encourage high school students to look further into the environmental and forestry fields as possible career choices.

Another opportunity for environmental education in the lake area presented itself a few months ago when I was contacted by Crystal Blue, a teacher at Dadeville Elementary School. We met, discussed possible areas where Lake Watch volunteers could assist, and have had subsequent meetings.

The school obtained a LaMotte chemical test kit, and several volunteers including Mary Ann, Judy Palfrey, her daughter Heather, and Myrna Lehman, met with teachers who work with the After-School Program...specifically a handful who are interested in science... to plan modest training on the test kit, and make plans for supporting the program. We'll have more to report on the *Stream Team* and DES programs in future newsletters.

One final note. As Mary Ann and I remain involved in volunteer work with teachers, it becomes more and more obvious how folks like Lake Watch members can get involved with local schools. And not just in the environmental field. We all have talents and life experiences, and teachers are always thirsting for help in classrooms. Maybe devote an hour a week...talk about your profession...discuss growing old...travels...hobbies. Anything. But please get involved.



Laurel Goldsmith, Lake Watch Treasurer, teaching 5th graders about water resources via the 'Edible Aquafer' activity at the Tallapoosa County Water Festival.

Thoughts on the Constellation Energy Resources/Exelon Situation

Dick Bronson, Lake Watch Board member, LW founder and former long-time President

Some of you are aware that Lake Watch recently filed an objection to a request to ADEM from the Constellation Energy Resources/Exelon generation plant to modify their permit and discharge wastewater into a small creek called Oaktasi that feeds directly into Hillabee Creek, a major tributary of Lake Martin north of town.

The request to change the permit is an obvious attempt to save money by the corporate owner...Exelon, a Chicago-based corporation with huge assets...but it flies in the face of good common sense. The old adage might apply here...if it ain't broke, don't fix it. And it also sets a bad precedent because it would conflict with the rules set by ADEM when they designated Lake Martin as a Treasured Alabama Lake in 2011. Those rules state, in part:

“New discharges or expansions of existing discharges shall not be allowed unless a thorough evaluation of all practicable treatment and disposal alternatives by the permit applicant has demonstrated to the satisfaction of the Department that there is no feasible alternative.”

But, of course, there is a feasible alternative...it's what they are doing now. And that's exactly what several speakers from Lake Watch and the HOBOS said during the ADEM public hearing last month. Virtually all speakers were in opposition to the permit modification.

However, I've been down this road before, and will not be surprised if ADEM grants approval. Should this occur, it won't be the end of the world, although it will set a bad precedent for the future. The saving grace is that nature has a pretty well-established way of taking care of pollutants in our waters.

Lake Watch Website

Laurel Goldsmith, Lake Watch Treasurer

Have you checked out our Lake Watch website lately at www.lakewatch.org? You can find all kinds of interesting information, including a list of our test sites, research reports, information on how to volunteer, news and events relating to our mission, and handy links and maps. You can also sign in and update your contact information so that we can keep you up-to-date on important happenings on our lake. Don't forget—we're on FaceBook too!

Exciting changes for Alabama Water Watch

Eric Reutebuch, Lake Watch Board of Directors member and AWW Director

Hundreds of citizen monitors volunteer hundreds of hours each year in stewardship of streams, rivers, lakes, bays and bayous statewide. Volunteers trained and certified in water quality monitoring (water chemistry, bacteriological, stream biomonitoring) have tested over 2,200 sites on 800⁺ waterbodies over the past two decades, submitting nearly 80,000 water data records to the AWW database, as well as achieving waterbody upgrades (one being on our beloved Lake Martin –

Treasured Alabama Lake), resolution of countless water pollution problems, and education of thousands of youth and adults in aquatic ecology, water quality and watershed stewardship.

2014 turned out to be a very good year as well as one of transition for AWW. AWW merged with the AU Water Resources Center in mid-2013, and we moved into our new home in the CASIC Building in the Auburn Research Park. AWW's founder and long-time director, Bill Deutsch retired and turned over his duties to me at the AWW Annual Meeting last June. I consider it an honor and a great challenge to follow in his footsteps!

This year's 113 workshops conducted was one of the all-time highs, thanks in large part to our dedicated citizen trainers, and our super-workshop-coordinator, Rita Grub. With 470 new water watchers on the ground, we will get even closer to realizing our vision of having a monitor on every stream, river, lake, bay and bayou in the state. And thanks to support from the Alabama Cooperative Extension System and the work of Mona Scruggs Dominquez, more than 500 young Alabamians have learned about this state's aquatic treasures and how to preserve and protect them.

Sergio Ruiz-Córdova, our resident database guru, has been putting in some long, late hours which will benefit us all in the coming years. Working closely with programmer-extraordinaire, Jim Johnson, who created the AWW online database back in the early 2000s, they will be rolling out an upgraded, faster, better AWW database in the coming months. For the first time, we will be able to visualize and query AWW data by watershed, making it easier to interpret and utilize AWW water data.

AWW has some other exciting developments planned for 2015. We've been working with collaborators in other departments on campus, Dr. Roth at Micrology Labs, and with AWW monitoring groups on Little Lagoon, Lake Logan Martin and with Lake Watch of Lake Martin on a new toolbox for citizen monitors. Preliminary testing of this new tool, an Easygel 'card' that when inoculated with water, tests for *Enterococcus*, shows lots of promise – especially for our coastal monitors, since *Enterococcus* is the bacteria of choice for monitoring fecal contamination in marine waters. We'll keep you posted!

Lastly, we've been very hard at work on "The Swim Guide," a very cool website-and-app for checking out over 6,000 swimming areas in the US, Canada and even into Mexico. You can access water monitoring info and find out if the water is safe or unsafe for swimming based on bacteria test results. AWW became an official Swim Guide affiliate last year, and just add our FIRST site on Lake Martin, thanks to help from the good folks at Wind Creek State Park – check it out at www.swimguide.org. Read more on it in the upcoming January issue of *Lake Magazine*.

Though we are greatly appreciative of ongoing support from the Alabama Cooperative Extension System and the Alabama Agriculture Experiment Station at Auburn University, the long-term viability of AWW still depends on the support of Alabamians...through monitoring, joining the AWW Association, donating, and voicing support of AWW. If you haven't already – come join us on our journey! For details on the different ways that you can get involved, visit the AWW website (www.alabamawaterwatch.org).

I want to personally thank all of you for all that you do in support of the AWW Program, and preserving our treasured Alabama waters for all to enjoy!

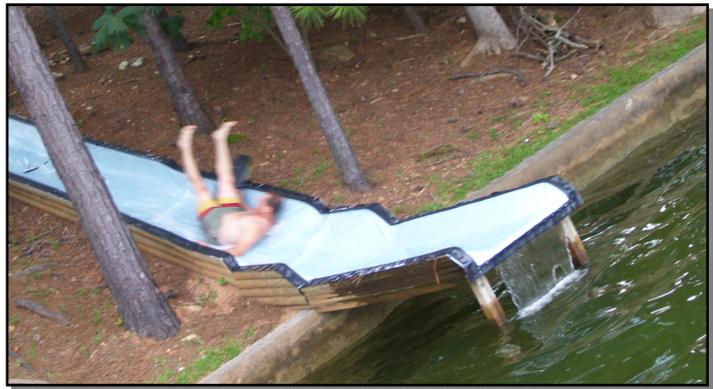
Our Upstream Neighbors - Lake Wedowee Dam Relicensing

Barry Morris, Chairman of the Standing Committee on Water Issues, Lake Wedowee Property Owners Association reports that Alabama Power expects to begin the relicensing process on R.L. Harris Reservoir (Lake Wedowee) in 2015, and tentatively expects to begin taking public input in 2016. At this time the completion date for the entire process is unknown. The Lake Wedowee Property Owners Association hopes to benefit from the experience of Lake Watch of Lake Martin so it won't have to "reinvent the wheel" as Lake Wedowee works through the process.

Dues Reminder

Take the plunge, if you haven't already!

Support Lake Watch! And ask a neighbor to do the same!



For the many faithful Lake Watch members who already sent in their dues for 2015, thank you! And for those who haven't yet, don't forget to send a check to: P. O. Box 72 Alexander City, AL 35010 to keep you current. Membership levels are listed below:

Regular dues (annual): Student \$10 Individual \$15 Family \$25

Lake Martin Steward: Silver \$50 Gold \$100 Platinum \$250

We also welcome your donations. Don't forget—a donation in someone's honor or memory is a lovely gift or tribute.

Lake Watch

Lake Martin

P. O. Box 72

Alexander City, AL 35010

