

# Lake Watch

of Lake Martin

Newsletter No. 31  
20 December 2003

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*Happy Holidays to all!* It's a good time of the year to stop and reflect on our many blessings, whether family, health or just the privilege of living on or around Lake Martin. If you are like Mary Ann and me, you have those same reflections year round.

**Announcement:** This is also a good time to announce some great news about a **major project** called the **Tallapoosa Watershed Project (TWP)**. Remember this term, because you'll be hearing a lot about it during the next few years. The official name is "*A Transferable Model of Stakeholder Partnerships for Addressing Nutrient Dynamics in Southeastern Watersheds*"...a real mouthful and easy to see why we shortened it. Just remember the Tallapoosa Watershed Project.

The project is a result of Lake Watch discussions with Dr. Bill Deutsch, Alabama Water Watch Program Director, about expanding the direction of the volunteer monitoring program on Lake Martin from the one we've conducted since 1992. As we enter our 12th year of collecting water quality data on a monthly basis at a dozen sites, we've amassed an impressive amount of high-quality data about Lake Martin and the Tallapoosa River watershed. Clearly our volunteer monitoring teams are ready for bigger and better things.

The discussions coincided with an opportunity to compete for a USDA federal grant. Bill formed a team to write a grant proposal and numerous meetings followed with a variety of collaborators from the surrounding area. Early this summer, Bill was notified that the grant was approved for a total amount of \$550,000.

Here's the official description. The **three-year** project will integrate a variety of research, education and extension activities to provide relevant, locally generated watershed information. Research will result in a comprehensive assessment of nutrient concentrations and loading in the Tallapoosa River system and compare the cost benefits of three levels of technology...**lo-tech** monitoring by Lake Watch volunteers, **standard-method tech** by Auburn fisheries personnel, and **hi-tech** analyses using close range and satellite remote sensing data and Geographic Information Systems (GIS) modeling.

The project will provide a detailed look at various sources of water quality degradation and how it affects Lake Martin and the Tallapoosa River watershed. Particular attention will be given to possible causes for increasing levels of chlorophyll *a* (nitrates & phosphates) as indicated by lake sampling done by Auburn the last twelve years. Lake Watch volunteers will work alongside scientists from both AU and UA using our traditional LaMotte test kits and more sophisticated equipment, including Hach colorimeters to test nitrate levels, and devices to measure suspended solids from soil erosion. We'll also help conduct detailed biological assessments of a number of local streams with AU fisheries personnel. The end result will be a lake and watershed with more concentrated testing and analysis than any other in the state.

There are five major partners in the project: **Auburn University**, the **University of Alabama**, the **Alabama Cooperative Extension System**, the **Alabama Department of Education**, and **Lake Watch**. Each organization has a unique role in meeting the project objectives.

- AU: **Dr. Bill Deutsch** is the overall project director and has the support of **Dr. David Bayne**, **Dr. Len Vining**, and the fisheries department.

- UA: **Dr. Luoheng Han** provides hi-tech expertise in remote sensing and GIS modeling.

- ACES: County Agent **Tommy Futral** provides a vital connection with county-wide environmental education and the local agriculture community.

- Department of Education: Environmental education specialist **Robin Nelson** provides an important link with state and local educators.

- Lake Watch: **John Glasier** combines his extensive technical experience with our connection to the grassroots members who are so critical to project success.

Other collaborators in the project include **educators** from throughout the county, the **Middle Tallapoosa Clean Water Partnership**, and **Camp ASCCA**. An annual *State of the Watershed* conference will be held at Camp ASCCA's environmental center in 2004 to inform various agencies and the public about our findings.

By now, you're probably wondering just what the real payoff is for all the money being spent. Good question. Notice again part of the official title of the project...a *transferable* model. What we hope to show is that emerging technology, ie. space-based systems supplemented by citizen-based monitoring, can accurately determine water quality trends and sources of degradation in a cost-effective way. If it works here on our watershed, it can work in other watersheds, whether in Alabama or elsewhere. There will also be a huge spin-off in the education field by involving local science teachers, students and other stakeholders who can access an informative website now under development.

Clearly this is a big project and will require more involvement by Lake Watch volunteers helping with water sampling, getting more involved with our *Living Streams* environmental education program, and getting trained on more sophisticated equipment. One requirement will be to meet soon with those Lake Watch volunteers who currently conduct monthly testing to consider changes to the program. We likely will reduce the number of sites, modify the frequency of tests, and realign some locations to match up better with TWP test sites. That meeting will occur shortly after the holidays.

So, am I excited about the project? You bet I am! It goes to the heart of what Lake Watch is all about...a scientific approach to water quality, environmental education, and public awareness of water quality issues. Good news indeed!

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**Water Wars.** Not much news lately about how Alabama, Georgia and Florida are faring in their water-sharing negotiations. Many of you know that Florida pulled out of negotiations with Alabama and Georgia earlier this year over allocating the waters of the Appalachian-Chattoohoochee-Flint (ACF) River Basin, and that case is headed to court.

As a result, negotiations between Alabama and Georgia over the waters of the Alabama-Coosa-Tallapoosa (ACT) River Basin seem to be on the back burner. That's probably good, because even though the ACT and ACF compacts are not linked in a legal sense, a settlement over waters in one river basin could have huge implications in the other basin.

When the last draft proposal for the ACT was released on 1 May 2003, a number of environmental organizations, including Lake Watch, submitted their concerns and recommendations to Governor Bob Riley. It is our understanding that some may be incorporated into another revised proposal in the future. Just when remains to be seen.

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**Annual meeting.** The annual Lake Watch meeting was held at Camp ASCCA on 28 September 2003. The board of directors met prior to the meeting and approved a treasurer's balance of \$7651.09. The board also approved a grant to Camp ASCCA.

A nice crowd attended the general meeting and enjoyed a meal served by camp staff. A check for \$500 was presented to Camp ASCCA for use in their environmental education programs. Dr. Bill Deutsch gave a presentation on the Tallapoosa Watershed Project described earlier in this newsletter. The Woodfin Martin award was presented to Camp ASCCA by two members of the Martin family...Mrs. Larue Martin and their daughter Annie Waters from Phoenix, Arizona. For those who may not have known Woodfin (1915-1995), he was a charter member of Lake Watch, he was a well-respected and much loved member of the community, and he loved the lake.

Following the meeting, attendees toured ASCCA's new environmental center and received a briefing by Dan Gilliland. Our intent is to use the environmental center extensively as an outlet for data collected by the Tallapoosa Watershed Project.

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**Dissolved Oxygen standard for Martin Dam.** As discussed in the 14 May 2003 newsletter, the environmental community won a court decision to require Alabama Power Company to apply for water quality certification and adopt a minimum standard of 5.0 mg/l for dissolved oxygen in their discharge water from Martin Dam. However, the ruling was undone when the Alabama Department of Environmental Management caved in under pressure and granted certification of a lower standard. This is another example of why ADEM must be reformed...hopefully in my lifetime!

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**Sugar Creek testing.** In the last newsletter it was predicted that EPA would soon complete their analysis of sediment samples taken in May 2003 to determine whether municipal and industrial sediment on the lake bottom in the Sugar Creek and Elkahatchee Creek basins pose a threat to public health. It appears there is more analysis to be completed, particularly on fish tissues, so a final report is still somewhere in the future. Early reports from ADEM and EPA indicate there may be some rather disturbing substances in the sediment. More in future issues.

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**Membership.** Many thanks to those who renewed their memberships. For those who have renewal dates coming up, I've notated due dates on the enclosed slips. Thanks again...and have a **Merry Christmas** and a **Happy New Year!**

# Lake Watch

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Newsletter No. 32  
30 June 2004  
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Newsletter time again. Seems like the months between them gets longer as the years go by. I'll try to do better!

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**Under the weather.** Two of our founding members have been in and out of the hospital the past few weeks...Cecile Runnells and Tommy Gould. Please keep them in your thoughts and prayers.

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**Tallapoosa Watershed Project (TWP).** As announced in the last newsletter, we're going strong on the project, working with both Auburn University and the University of Alabama on a major effort to assess the nutrient levels in the Tallapoosa River watershed and determine loading sources. This has been a concern for several years because of trends showing increasing levels of chlorophyll *a* (nitrates & phosphates) in the lake. The three-year federal grant to Auburn provides funding for **low-tech** analysis by Lake Watch volunteers, **standard-method** analysis by AU Fisheries personnel, and **hi-tech** analysis using remote sensing expertise from UA and John Glasier.

Between AU, UA, ADEM and Lake Watch, we're testing 25 sites on the lake and river this year during the seven-month chlorophyll *a* growing season. We began in April and just completed our third month of testing with four more to go. Although the data is still preliminary, we're already seeing some interesting things that make the lake "tick". Once the data is correlated, it will be posted on the TWP website being developed by Auburn.

Test days are determined by when the Landsat 4/5 satellite is in the best position for viewing (every 16 days). Of course, weather is critical and clear skies are a must! The "hi-tech boat" is John Glasier's pontoon boat, and he normally is accompanied by Dr. Luoheng Han (UA) and a graduate assistant. They use a variety of computerized equipment to collect a large amount of high quality data from space! Yep, we've truly joined the computer age.

The Auburn Fisheries boat has Dr. David Bayne, Eric Reutebuch and Wendy Seesock on board doing their normal lake testing techniques. ADEM sends out their boat captained by Alex City's own Greg Vinson who literally grew up on Lake Martin. And Lake Watch volunteers use the Bronson pontoon boat and jet ski for their testing platforms. Quite an array of boats that attract plenty of curious looks and questions by other boaters.

A major part of the TWP is the educational component. Tommy Futral (County Extension Agent) and Robin Nelson (state environmental educational specialist) have already conducted a two-day workshop at Camp ASCCA for 15 science teachers from Tallapoosa County. More workshops are planned to begin adopting the state-wide environmental curriculum that is evolving from the project.

Another spin-off of the project is the involvement of Auburn's School of Education. Students who are future science teachers will learn water quality testing techniques

through the Alabama Water Watch office, and some will participate in field projects in the area, to include our *Living Streams* environmental program for children.

The focus of the TWP this year is on Lake Martin and the river upstream to Coley Creek. In 2005 the testing focus will shift to Lake Wedowee (Harris Reservoir) in order to assess the entire watershed upstream that is so vital to the health of Lake Martin. Each year a *State of the Watershed* conference will be held at Camp ASCCA's Environmental Center to inform various agencies and the public of progress.

One of the more important aspects of the project is the interface it will have with the efforts of the Middle Tallapoosa Clean Water Partnership Committee. The committee, composed of a variety of local agencies and organizations including Lake Watch, is close to completing its watershed management plan. Data from the TWP will be shared with the committee to help develop action plans to address water quality concerns. **In other words, turning research into action...action that bodes well for the future of Alabama's cleanest lake.**

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**USGS testing.** The US Geological Service of Tuscaloosa has agreed to conduct profiling of Lake Martin this August to help determine the magnitude and characteristics of a persistent substance plume that has been found in various parts of the lake. The plume is identified by specific conductance testing and may be coming from the Sugar Creek wastewater treatment plant discharge pipe that was relocated to the main channel near Piney Woods in 2000. These tests will supplement AU testing that is being done in the discharge pipe area for the City of Alexander City. Results will be shared with readers.

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**Lake Watch gift to Alabama Water Watch.** During the Alabama Water Watch technical meeting in February, Dr. Bill Deutsch discussed how state and federal funding shortfalls are threatening the future of the program. In recognition of how much the AWW program office has assisted Lake Watch through the years, the Lake Watch Board of Directors met and voted to award an unrestricted gift of \$1000 to AWW. The award was presented at their annual meeting in early June. In addition, a Lake Watch letter was sent to other Water Watch organizations around the state suggesting they also help. So far, \$3000 has been contributed to AWW.

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**Donation to Lake Watch.** One never knows when or how people will be affected by Lake Watch volunteers. During our annual *Living Streams* program for St. James fifth-graders at Camp ASCCA in May, we had a young man who enjoyed his experience in the stream catching bugs. However, the boy's Dad enjoyed himself even more and was so impressed with the work done by Lake Watch volunteers that he sent us a generous contribution of \$1000! Our sincere thanks to Thomas Methvin.

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**Environmental education.** Lake Watch has conducted *Living Streams* programs for approximately 800 children so far this year, bringing the overall total to nearly 3000 since we began doing environmental education in 1997. The popularity of the program continues to grow...and so does the effort of volunteers to make it happen. Climbing in and out of streams and ponds trying to keep ahead of kids whose legs are much younger

than ours is becoming more and more of a challenge. Just ask **Bill & Linda Stewart, John & Sharon Glasier, David & Diana French, Judy Palfrey, Dick Duncan,** and the **Bronsons!** Here are the programs we've supported in 2004.

31 March-2 April: St. James School fifth-graders at ASCCA

3 April: Alex City Camp Fire girls at ASCCA

21 April thru 7 May: *Classroom in a Forest*; all fifth-graders in the county.

14 May: Alabama Post-Adoption Agency at ASCCA

(still to come) Wiregrass Hospice kids at ASCCA over Labor Day weekend

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**Is it worth it?** Occasionally, after a tiring day in the stream, Lake Watch volunteers will contemplate whether or not we're having any effect on kids. Well, all we have to do is re-read the letters and notes we receive from kids who have experienced the lessons of *Living Streams*. Following is a recent letter from a fifth-grader at St. James School.

*Dear Lake Watch:*

4-6-04

*"I enjoyed your class very much. In case you did not know, I am the child who caught a big salamander. My name is Joseph. I learned a lot about bugs underwater. The bugs I caught were really cool. You were an inspiration to me to try and find new species of bugs. I am 10 and wondering if you go for Auburn or Alabama. I go for Auburn and hope you do too. Please write back and be sure to write who your favorite football team is."*

*Sincerely, Joseph Whitt*

*(drawing of salamander in stream)*

I wrote back to Joseph and encouraged him to become a science teacher. I told him I like both teams because they are young men trying their best... but I also gave him a "War Eagle" cheer.

One last anecdote about how our environmental education program impacts kids. Last month while working with the Post-Adoption Agency kids (remember, many of these kids have had pretty tough experiences in their young lives), one tiny and timid 10-year old girl asked me if she could keep a salamander we'd just caught. When I told her we needed to return the critters back to the water, I asked her what she would do with the salamander if she could keep it. She looked at me with large sad brown eyes and said, *"I've never had a pet before."* Gulp! I was glad Mary Ann wasn't close enough to hear her plea...or we'd have had an instant house guest gorging herself on home baked cookies. So is it worth it? You bet!

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**Annual meeting and picnic.** We're planning our annual meeting and picnic for mid-September at Camp ASCCA where we had such a good turnout and support last year. Once we get a final date and details, we'll send out notices to all members. See you there. And many thanks for your continued support of Lake Watch.

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Newsletter No. 33  
22 October 2004  
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**Remembrance.** Two charter members of Lake Watch died recently. **Tommy Gould** had been ill for several years and will be remembered as one of the original Raintree residents who had the courage to file a lawsuit against polluters of a part of the lake where he lived. **Dr. Bill Niedermeier** was a biochemist who served as the scientific advisor to our board and was an excellent volunteer lake monitor. Both were patriotic military veterans and friends who will be missed. Our condolences to Faye and BJ.

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**Board meeting.** The Lake Watch board of directors met at the Bronson home on 23 August 2004.

The Treasurer reported a balance of \$7467.80. The board granted \$500 to Camp ASCCA for use in their environmental education program, with presentation to be made at the annual meeting. The board also discussed a program to award small grants to local science teachers for classroom projects related to water quality. More discussion on this topic will take place at the next board meeting.

The following board members asked to be nominated for another 3-year term to be voted on at the annual meeting: John Glasier, Judy Palfrey, John Durr, and Dick Duncan. Bill Stewart, who served two terms, asked to be replaced. The board voted to ask Tom Collier, recently retired Camp ASCCA Director, to fill the vacancy. [For your information, the other serving board members are: Dick Bronson, John Bishop, Kathryn Braund, Diana French and Virginia Pietrzykowski (Sec/Treas).]

Other topics discussed at the board meeting were substance plume, YSI meter and tree salvage and are found below.

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**Substance plume.** As reported in the last newsletter, there is increasing concern about a persistent substance plume in the lake that appears to originate from the Sugar Creek wastewater treatment plant outfall that was re-located to the Piney Woods area of the lake in June 2001. Soon after the discharge pipe was moved, specific conductance profiling by Auburn University and the Alabama Department of Environmental Management began showing evidence of a plume along the original riverbed downstream from the outfall. The topic was discussed at meetings of the Middle Tallapoosa River Basin (Clean Water Partnership) Committee chaired by Mayor Don McClellan and it was agreed to monitor future profile reports for possible action.

In August 2004, representatives from the US Geological Survey and Lake Watch conducted further profiling via the specific conductance method and found clear evidence that the plume had moved considerably further downstream than earlier tests had indicated...in fact, more than 3 miles downstream. There was also evidence that the plume had moved upstream from the diffuser several hundred meters, probably due to backflows, wind conditions and temperature differentials. These results were discussed recently at a meeting with representatives from Alexander City, CH2M HILL, USGS and

Lake Watch. The result was a decision by the City to have Auburn University begin more extensive testing including grab samples of the plume for analysis.

In the meantime, Lake Watch purchased a **YSI-85 meter** with a 100-ft cable to monitor the plume for specific conductance, dissolved oxygen, temperature and salinity. Recent profiling with this device indicates the plume may stretch more than seven miles downstream from the diffuser. More profiling will help determine what happens to the plume when the lake does its annual 'turn-over' this fall. We also obtained from USGS a deep-water sampler to take grab samples from the plume for analysis.

From all the evidence gathered so far, it appears that errors were made in the modeling predictions of how the wastewater would interact with the surrounding water after being discharged from the outfall diffuser. Instead of the wastewater being assimilated into the water column, it appears that the higher density effluent is stratifying at an approximate depth of 45-ft all the way to the lake bottom. Early assumptions are that much of the substance contains chlorides that are inherent in textile wastewater, and this will be verified by grab sample analysis. However, if chlorides are present in the plume, the next question is what else is there and what is the impact on the lake?

As you can tell, we are taking the plume seriously and will follow the issue closely through our own monitoring action and by working in partnership with the city. The issue is also included in the middle-Tallapoosa watershed management plan being developed by the Clean Water Partnership committee to ensure that appropriate action is taken. -More on this in future issues.

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**Tree salvage.** Earlier this year, Lake Watch learned that an individual had requested permission from Alabama Power Company to salvage submerged timber from the lake bottom. Apparently, many of the trees cut nearly 80 years ago when Martin Dam was under construction were heart pine, a desirable and valuable wood for home construction.

While the idea has some interesting aspects, there are several problems. The Department of Conservation & Natural Resources (Fisheries) has cited concerns about salvaging at certain depths because of possible harm to aquatic habitat. Lake Watch has objected because of the potential for re-suspending into the water column some harmful compounds that may have accumulated in the lake bottom sediment. We have requested that the salvager be required to demonstrate through appropriate sediment analysis that his operations will not cause water quality degradation.

There are also concerns that salvage operations might inadvertently release logs that could surface and pose safety problems for boaters. This was given a bit more credibility after the salvager described an old submerged tree measuring 4-1/2 feet in diameter and 60-ft long that surfaced in the lake last year. Now that would get your attention!

However, the Department of Environmental Management (that stalwart guardian (?) of our environmental resources) has posed no objection to date. Go figure! Officials at



Alabama Power Company, who owns the bottom of the lake, report that the project is in a holding pattern until all concerns are considered. We'll keep you posted.

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**Visit by Chinese guests.** Fifteen extension agents from China visited Camp ASCCA recently where Dr. Bill Deutsch, Wendy Hartup and the Bronsons conducted biological assessment training as part of their study of water-related activities. They then visited the Bronson home on Lake Martin for dessert and a try at our 75-foot water slide. What they lacked in form was more than made up for by their enthusiasm...they practically wore out their legs running back up the hill for more trips down the slide.

In addition to the water slide adventure, David French provided his pontoon boat and conducted tube rides for the guests...that is, until the tube deflated. And as our visitors were departing back to Auburn, we presented them with hats embroidered with the Lake Watch logo. Several remarked about the high quality of the hats and one checked the inside label. You guessed it...“Made in China”. Some thought we planned it all.

Everyone had a great time and many friendships were established. As a matter of interest, during the past ten years Lake Watch has hosted more than 50 guests from 13 countries. The visits have been enjoyable and rewarding for both sides of the ocean.

One more anecdote. A few years ago, we hosted Bill Deutsch and a young lady from China who spoke fairly good English but was not overly familiar with our language peculiarities. As we headed to the local marina for lunch, Mary Ann was explaining their menu that included chicken fingers. “Chicken fingers?” she said with a puzzled look, trying to visualize just where those fingers might come from. So I whispered to Mary Ann that I couldn't wait for her explanation of buffalo wings.

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**Water Wars update.** Not much to report. Lake Watch representatives attended a recent Water Resources Commission meeting where the discussion centered on several lawsuits that were resurrected when Alabama decided it might fare better in court and allowed the ACT compact to expire. At least three legal actions are moving through the courts.

There has been recent encouragement from federal agencies that the states keep trying to arrive at an equitable solution to the critical issue of water allocation...in essence, to take advantage of the research and study already completed as a springboard for future cooperation. There has been some indication that both Alabama and Georgia are listening. Let's hope so.

One negative by-product of the failed negotiations is that, under the federal compact, there were clear requirements for openness and public involvement. Now the process can be as open...or as secret...as the two states desire. In the meantime, we'll attempt to keep up with whatever progress is made and report it here.

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**Tallapoosa Watershed Project.** We're winding down the first year of the TWP and the monitoring program for Lake Martin and the adjacent watershed upstream. Since the study focuses on nutrients (phosphorus and nitrogen), and the chlorophyll *a* growing

season is roughly 7-months long, the last month for testing is October. As reported in the last newsletter (see our website if you didn't retain it), the focus in 2005 shifts upstream to Harris Reservoir and the upper Tallapoosa River watershed. We'll still maintain our current TWP monitoring on Lake Martin.

This has been an interesting and time-consuming effort so far. Four boats are used each month (ADEM, AU Fisheries, John Glasier's pontoon, and the Bronson pontoon (I've even used my jet ski as a testing platform with excellent results). Most of the coordination for each month's testing is done by John Glasier.

One of the better spin-offs of the project is the way Lake Watch is working in partnership with the crew at the Sugar Creek Treatment Plant lab facility. Each month our lake water samples are taken to the city lab for total suspended solids analysis, with full participation by lab employees Chris & Glenda Abbett. Chris also attended workshops at AU with Lake Watch reps for training in testing for phosphorus and nitrogen content.

There are 25 sites on the lake and river upstream to Coley Creek sampled each month. This results in a large amount of data, and Auburn University is busy getting their website ready to display the data. A preliminary look indicates that citizen monitoring data, coupled with remote sensing hyperspectral and satellite data, will allow us to detect a great amount of information without always having to resort to the more expensive standard laboratory method. We are developing a cost-effective method of assessing water quality trends and a better understanding of how the lake 'ticks'.

The first public discussion of the data will likely be done during the Annual State of the Watershed Conference to be held next year at Camp ASCCA. More information later.

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**Lake Watch annual meeting and luncheon.** The annual meeting was held at Camp ASCCA's new environmental center on Saturday 2 October 2004 with a nice crowd of 60 in attendance. The date was a bit later than normal to take advantage of the center's grand opening the day before.

During the short business meeting elections were held, returning John Glasier (Vice President), Judy Palfrey, John Durr, and Dick Duncan for another three years. **Tom Collier** was elected as a new board member, replacing **Bill Stewart** who served well and faithfully. Welcome Tom and thanks Bill!

Following a meal of hamburgers and hot dogs grilled by John Glasier, Kyle Braund and David French, several awards were presented. **Mayor Don McClellan** and the employees at the city's Sugar Creek Wastewater Treatment Plant received well-deserved recognition "*for their efforts in the spirit of Woodfin Martin on behalf of the Lake Martin community.*" The Mayor and plant superintendent **Stan Segrest** gave nice comments about Lake Watch and the positive spirit of cooperation between the two groups.

[For those who may not remember, Woodfin Martin was a charter member of Lake Watch who loved the lake and was always there for support and encouragement. We have honored his memory with awards through the years since his death in 1995.]

Following presentation of a \$500 check to Camp ASCCA for environmental education, we heard some anecdotes from guest speaker **Bill Brown**, former editor of the *Montgomery Advertiser* and owner/editor of the *Lake Martin Journal* (see his website at [www.lakemartinjournal.com](http://www.lakemartinjournal.com)). We particularly enjoyed his description of a news room motto, "*When your mother tells you she loves you, check it out!*" Good advice for Dan Rather. To close out the day **Dan Gilliland**, ASCCA'S Environmental Director, gave attendees a tour of the new facility that will be a real showcase when completed by year's end.

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**Farewells.** Best of luck to Don McClellan who leaves the job of mayor of Alexander City and to Stan Segrest who submitted his resignation and will retire at the end of the year. Both have done great work for the city and will be missed. And while we didn't always agree on things, we always respected each other's positions and ultimately formed a strong partnership with the common goal of being good stewards of our environment.

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Lake Watch reps hope to meet soon with new **Mayor Barbara Young** to extend our welcome and encouragement to continue the good work of those gone before.

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**EPA analysis.** Nearly two years ago, Lake Watch requested that EPA conduct a thorough analysis of materials from the Sugar Creek/Elkahatchee Creek area of the lake to determine whether there should be any further public health concerns following the relocation of the treatment plant discharge. Lake Watch recently learned that, because of several mishaps at the EPA laboratory, a complete analysis cannot yet be made and another series of water, sediment and fish samples must be taken. This will likely be done early next year and Lake Watch will again observe the procedures. EPA has given us assurance that a resolution of the issue will be accomplished and has indicated the Sugar Creek area of the lake has been placed on Region 4's 'list of concerned sites'. This means the final chapter of the Sugar Creek saga cannot yet be written.

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**Late breaking news...ADEM Director fired.** At a meeting of the Environmental Management Commission in Montgomery on 19 October, ADEM Director Jim Warr was fired on a 4-3 vote of commissioners. Mary Ann & I were in the audience and it got pretty tense during the procedural maneuverings of Warr's supporters and detractors.

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The action will obviously send shock waves through the agency and the fallout will take months to emerge. However, the move was long overdue and will at least provide a chance to break the incipient iron grip the business community has on the agency and restore public confidence. So...was it time for a change? You bet!

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**Thanks.** My appreciation is extended to members for your prompt response in renewing memberships...the method of including reminders in newsletters works well. And please remember that you can get a tax deduction for any additional donations to Lake Watch if it's done before the end of the year. Oops, sorry for reminding you that tax season is just around the corner.

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This will likely be the last newsletter before the holidays, so let me be the first to wish you a safe and happy season. See you next year.

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# Lake Watch

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Newsletter No. 34  
27 April 2005  
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Most of the following items were discussed at a meeting of the Board of Directors held at the French's home on Lake Martin on 21 April 2005.

- **Treasurer's balance** at \$6654.
- **Supplemental Environmental Project (SEP).** On 25 July 2002, a Consent Decree resulted from a Civil Action between United States v. defendants Russell Corporation, Avondale Mills and Alexander City for violations of the Clean Water Act. The consent decree required the defendants to apply certain fines and penalties toward a Supplemental Environmental Project (SEP), specifically to purchase real property and/or conservation easements in the Middle Tallapoosa River watershed in Tallapoosa County. The SEP property is to be held by a neutral third party (Land Trust) for the purpose of protecting, restoring, and/or enhancing water quality, wetlands, and riparian areas and to be retained in its natural condition in perpetuity. The SEP property consists of 88 acres along and near Hillabee Creek and Little Hillabee Creek 8 miles north of Alexander City.
- **Letter to EPA.** A letter from Lake Watch was sent to EPA Region 4 in Atlanta requesting the status of a final report on the analysis of sediment and water samples from the Sugar Creek and Elkahatchee Creek areas of Lake Martin. An interim response from EPA should be received in a few days, with the final report expected in 3-4 months after a risk assessment is completed. Final results will be shared with members, possibly in the next newsletter.
- **"Water Quality" day.** The board agreed to support an outing for 5<sup>th</sup> & 6<sup>th</sup> graders from Horseshoe Bend School on 11 May 2005. The program will be coordinated by Tommy Futral, Auburn Cooperative Extension Service Agent.
- **ASCCA support.** The board agreed to provide \$500 to Camp ASCCA to help offset the cost of stipends they pay to college students who assist us with *Living Streams* programs. So far this year, two students from Auburn University (Jill Kelsey & Kelly Misiak) and one from CACC (Ryan Gaither) have helped us with programs for over 200 kids from St. James School in Montgomery, Alexander City Campfire Girls, and Wrights Mill Elementary in Auburn. They will also help with at least 6 more groups scheduled for *Living Streams* programs at ASCCA this summer. These college students are young, energetic and a great help to our Lake Watch volunteers. We anticipate more help from AU and CACC in the future as the good word spreads.
- **Mini-grants for teachers.** In line with Lake Watch's emphasis on environmental education, the board agreed to a program of mini-grants for science teachers for

water projects. A committee will write a "request-for-proposal" format that will be provided to Tallapoosa County science teachers this fall. The program will likely be expanded to other surrounding counties later. Teachers who are interested in competing for the grants will submit their proposals to Lake Watch for consideration. Grant amounts will be in the \$250 range and will be awarded directly to teachers for their discretionary use on water projects.

- **Tallapoosa Watershed Project (TWP).** An update on the project was provided to board members. Year-one sampling on Lake Martin and the adjoining Tallapoosa River watershed was completed last November with three levels of technology...**hi-tech** using hyperspectral, remote sensing and satellite imagery by scientists from the University of Alabama and Lake Watch; **standard methods** by Auburn University fisheries scientists; and **lo-tech** using data collected by citizen monitors from Lake Watch. The year-two focus shifts upstream to Lake Harris and the upper watershed in 2005, while testing continues on Lake Martin.

TWP data and test results will be showcased at the first annual *State of Our Watershed* free two-day conference to be held at Camp ASCCA's new environmental center on **5 & 6 May 2005**.

The first day (Thurs 5 May) will focus on research by the TWP partners and will include results from water quality, remote sensing and fisheries biology studies.

Day two (Fri 6 May) will focus on TWP education and extension activities, including how the data is being adapted for use in classrooms and for the general public in a variety of forms.

Lake Watch members are encouraged to attend the conference and will find more details and the on-line registration form at [www.twp.auburn.edu](http://www.twp.auburn.edu).

- **Alabama Water Watch** annual meeting and picnic. The annual AWW meeting, which in the past was held at the Auburn-north fishponds, will be held this year at Camp ASCCA on Lake Martin. The meeting is scheduled for 11:00 AM to 2:30 PM on **Saturday 4 June 2005** at ASCCA's new environmental center and will feature a free meal, live entertainment, and lots of good information about Water Watch activities from Program Director Dr. Bill Deutsch. For those who desire more excitement, a 90-min canoe trip on the Tallapoosa will start at 8:30 AM from the old covered bridge site on Highway 49 adjacent to the Horseshoe Bend National Military Park and take-out at Jaybird Landing. Those interested in the canoe trip should call AWW-rep Liz Langston at (850) 457-8695 to reserve a free canoe (first 20 callers get to go). Of course, you can also bring your own canoe.

Lake Watch is the host organization this year and all member families are invited and encouraged to attend. For reservations, call the AWW office toll-free at 1-888-844-4785 or Lake Watch reps at (256) 825-9353 or (256) 825-6412.

### **Other news and updates**

**New Shoreline Permitting rules** were announced by Alabama Power Company that will affect some members. Beginning 1 July 2005, a \$250 fee will be charged for residential permits for new construction, major reconstruction, or when a property or lease is sold. *[More recent information indicates that the fee for "major reconstruction" will be delayed until 1 January 2006.]* The fees are part of APC's increased emphasis on shoreline protection and enforcement. While many have questioned the high cost of the fees, there is certainly a clear need for better control as the lake becomes more populated. For more information, call the APC office in Dadeville at (256) 825-0053.

**Water Wars.** Not much news or progress lately. Whatever happens now will likely be determined by the courts as several suits wind their way through the federal system.

**Submerged tree salvage.** Alabama Power Company may allow a small demonstration of salvaging 2-3 trees from the lake bottom sometime this fall to determine how such an operation might impact the lake. Lake Watch has requested the opportunity to observe.

**New ADEM Director.** Newly appointed director Trey Glenn seems to have hit the ground running and has certainly displayed a willingness to listen to citizens and hear their concerns. The toughest challenge for him will be to change the culture within the organization that took years to develop...that of simply being a permitting agency for polluters and being overly influenced by the business community. Most environmental groups, including Lake Watch, have taken a positive approach to Trey's appointment and have pledged to work with him to improve Alabama's environment.

**Substance plume.** Lake Watch continues to monitor the plume of dense material that appears to come from Alexander City's wastewater treatment plant discharge pipe that was re-located in June 2001 from the Sugar Creek area to the main channel near Piney Woods. Tests done over the winter indicate that some of the plume dissipated when the lake "turned over" due to normal temperature inversion in the fall. However, as the lake begins its normal temperature stratification this spring, the plume is back and is expected to grow as summer arrives. Lake Watch reps are exploring ways to have water samples analyzed to determine the possible impact on the lake. More on this in future issues.

**Bald eagles.** Many of you have seen bald eagles around the lake, and if you're like Mary Ann and me, it never ceases to be a thrill to see one. Last week we saw two immature bald eagles on the nest near the DARE Park area and a mature one sitting on a tree on Youngs Island. Beautiful!

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### **Reminders:**

**5-6 May:** *State of Our Watershed* conference, ASCCA. Register at [www.twp.auburn.edu](http://www.twp.auburn.edu).

**4 June:** AWW annual meeting/picnic, ASCCA. Call 1-888-844-4785 or (256) 825-9353.

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**Membership renewal:** The system of notation reminders on renewal slips has worked well and your great response is sincerely appreciated. Many thanks!

# Lake Watch

of Lake Martin

Newsletter No. 35  
15 December 2005  
[www.lakewatch.org](http://www.lakewatch.org)

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Wow, it's almost Christmas again! Seems like only yesterday I put away our tree for another year. Guess time speeds up when one reaches 39, huh?

Annual meeting. Lake Watch held its thirteenth annual meeting at Camp ASCCA's environmental center on Sunday 25 September 2005 with approximately 50 in attendance. Business items on the agenda were as follows:

- The treasurer reported a balance of \$6212.22 with membership remaining at around 300. This is a comfortable fund level for us, particularly as there are no large expenditures anticipated other than science teacher mini-grants described later in this newsletter.

- Officer and board member elections were held. Re-elected to the board for new terms were John Bishop, Kathryn Braund and Diana French. Also returned to office were Dick Bronson (President) and Virginia Pietrzykowski (Secretary/Treasurer). Remaining board members are John Glasier (Vice President), Tom Collier, Dick Duncan, John Durr and Judy Palfrey.

- Board member Diana French reported on the Lake Watch mini-grant program and announced the first \$250 award to Mikki Carroll, 5<sup>th</sup> grade science teacher at Horseshoe Bend School. The check was presented at the school with several students present and a nice write-up with photo in the local newspaper. The funds are provided for the purpose of teacher-selected water quality projects. Lake Watch will assist with the projects and describe them in future newsletters.

- Three Woodfin Martin\* awards were presented to:

Leon and Cecile Runnells for their unceasing support during the critical time in 1990-91 when Lake Watch was forming and for their sage advice about the pollution problem in the Sugar Creek area of the lake. It is a testament to their courage that they took strong steps to address the problem.

Bill and Linda Stewart for their dedication to Lake Watch for ten years...Bill for his service as a board member, and both as excellent water quality monitors and volunteers for the *Living Streams* programs. Their willingness to share their time and talent with young people touched many lives in a positive way.

David and Diana French for their untiring support of several Lake Watch programs. Both are excellent water quality monitors and enthusiastic teachers of aquatic science during *Living Streams* programs. Diana serves as a board member and organized the science teacher mini-grant program.

\*Woodfin Martin (1915-1995) was a charter member of Lake Watch who reflected the spirit of those who care deeply about protecting the beautiful waters of Lake Martin. He spent most of his life around the lake and was a quiet but effective voice for the environment.

- Following a catered meal, members moved to the media room to hear guest speaker **Dr. Doug Phillips** give his views on life in Alabama and how we should embrace the rural lifestyle and insist that our political leaders and planners make intelligent decisions about future growth. Doug is the Director and star of the award winning *Discovering Alabama* series on Public Television. His excellent videos are used in classrooms throughout the state. After a good Q&A session, the annual meeting adjourned.

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Mini-grant program. The second mini-grant was awarded to **Christie Davis**, science teacher at Dadeville's Council School. A check for \$250 was presented in the classroom with County Extension Agent Tommy Futral attending. Another grant request is under consideration.

The mini-grant program, a new initiative of Lake Watch, is geared to offer modest funding to science teachers to assist them in teaching children the importance of good stewardship of the environment. It is the belief of the board that more "bang for the buck" is gained by working with children, whether in the classroom or in streams with the *Living Streams* programs. As we learn over and over again, kids love it when they can get wet and dirty and learn neat things at the same time. That's equally true of adults, especially our volunteers who help so often at Camp ASCCA. Based on feedback from teachers, it is likely that we will continue the mini-grant program next year to involve more science teachers throughout the county.

>>> And one more thing. *Get ready, here comes my pitch.* If you are looking for an end-of-year tax-exempt contribution option, look no further than the mini-grant program. The opportunity to help kids be better citizens who appreciate the incredible gifts of nature might be attractive to you. And if you need a letter for tax purposes stating the IRS has designated Lake Watch a 501(c)(3) tax-exempt organization, I'll be happy to oblige. Thanks!

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Sugar Creek. Much has been written over the years about one of the central issues that spawned the grassroots organization called Lake Watch, and I thought a short historical perspective about Sugar Creek might be in order for those newer members.

✓ In 1989-90, it was learned that a disturbing discharge was entering Lake Martin via Sugar Creek from the local municipal wastewater treatment plant, a discharge that included large amounts of textile industry dye water. A visit to the waste entry site was a real shocker and prompted the first of many subsequent decisions...either ignore the problem or do something about it.

Thus began a number of events over more than a dozen years. First were calls and visits to local officials that were met with hostility and denial. Then meetings of concerned citizens, testimony at City Council meetings, public hearings, letters and editorials in the local paper, and a multitude of file reviews at the Alabama Department of Environmental Management (ADEM).

The issue continued to fester while water and sediment tests were conducted, three citizen lawsuits were filed, Alexander City upgraded the treatment plant at considerable expense, and plans were made to relocate the treatment plant discharge pipe.

The culmination came after investigations by EPA and formal charges by the Department of Justice resulted in a consent decree that included fines and penalties for violations of the Federal



Clean Water Act. The defendants were required to spend more than \$200,000 on a Supplemental Environmental Project (SEP) to acquire land and/or conservation easements in Tallapoosa County. The land will be held in perpetuity for the purposes of protecting, restoring, and enhancing water quality, wetlands areas, and riparian areas, including wildlife habitat.

The SEP has been completed to the satisfaction of EPA with the purchase of 88 acres just north of Alexander City bordering Hillabee and Little Hillabee Creeks, both within the Lake Martin watershed. An independent land trust organization has implemented a systematic stewardship program to monitor the SEP, conduct annual visits to the property, and report annually to EPA.

Prior to closing the books on the issue, EPA agreed to conduct independent tests of sediment, water and fish from the Sugar Creek area to remove any lingering concerns about public health exposure potential. Following many exhaustive tests, a long-awaited Risk Evaluation report was recently completed by EPA and forwarded to Lake Watch and to ADEM for their use in completing a final report that is expected in mid-2006.

However, even before the final report is written by ADEM, there is information in the EPA Risk Evaluation report that portends a welcome clean bill of health. The EPA report, while acknowledging the presence of certain textile dyes in sediment in the Sugar Creek area, concludes that, "*there should be little concern for any adverse effects to humans*". Good news indeed!

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*Living Streams at ASCCA.* Lake Watch volunteers logged an impressive number of hours in the water during *Living Streams* programs this spring and summer. We began in March with our ninth consecutive year with 90 St. James School 5<sup>th</sup> graders. This is a group our volunteers especially enjoy working with because of the enthusiastic kids and impressive support from parents and teachers.

Then followed *Living Streams* programs for 60 Campfire Girls from Alexander City (3 sessions), 80 3<sup>rd</sup> graders from Auburn's Wrights Mill School (2 sessions), another session for rainy-day makeup for St. James School, a session with 10 of Fletcher Scott's high school students, 4 sessions for the state-wide EnviroThon high school competition, 2 sessions for 40 kids with the Alabama Post-Adoption Agency, 75 kids from the County 4-H, and a session with Jim Pearson School 3<sup>rd</sup> graders.

Probably one of our more memorable *Living Streams* programs occurred in May when 5<sup>th</sup> grade students from Horseshoe Bend School met with 14 visitors from 6 countries involved in the Global Water Watch program. What a sight! Bright and enthusiastic kids romping in a beautiful stream with people from Brazil, Thailand, Ecuador, Philippines, Guatemala, and Argentina.

Of course, none of the *Living Streams* programs could be done without the outstanding support from Lake Watch volunteers and three college students from Auburn University and Central Alabama Community College. People like Diana & David French, Judy Palfrey, Dick Duncan, John Glasier, Tom Collier, Bill & Linda Stewart, Jill Kelsey, Kelley Mesiak, and Ryan Gaither. And not to forget my right-hand volunteer and wife Mary Ann who probably has more "water time" than I do.

And finally, there's an interesting project underway at the Alabama Water Watch office at Auburn University. Dr. Bill Deutsch is having the AWW biological assessment protocol (which we call *Living Streams*) revised to fit the requirements for Alabama school curriculum. It will be field-tested soon for final approval and use statewide. The program will be called...what else...*Living Streams*. Hmmm, maybe we should have copyrighted the term.

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Visitors from other countries. Lake Watch continues the tradition of hosting foreign visitors who come to the Alabama Water Watch office at AU for water related activities. Fourteen representatives from 6 Global Water Watch countries joined a few Lake Watch members at the Bronson's home in May and participated in a workshop to discuss topics concerning water quality monitoring and citizen organizations. The occasion offered a great opportunity to "test" our new pontoon boat and huge tube. It was quite a sight when 8 Global Water Watchers piled on the tube and rode the wild waves. Equally impressive was a front page photo in the local newspaper of 4 attendees from 4 different countries doing the "train" (as our grandkids call it) down our 75-ft waterslide into the lake. A good time was had by all.

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Tallapoosa Watershed Project (TWP). The first annual *State of Our Watershed Conference*, sponsored by the TWP, was held at Camp ASCCA's environmental center on 5-6 May 2005 with a great crowd both days.

Day One was mainly for those interested in hearing how the array of technical systems were working, and seeing the impressive reports on all the data collected and how it is being interpreted. Of particular note were various discussions between water resource managers about how the interface of systems (high-tech, standard methods, and low-tech) could be used to more effectively and efficiently assess water quality and assist with resource decisions, whether in the Tallapoosa watershed or other watersheds in the state.

Day Two focused on the educational aspects of the project and how the data and the impressive website under development can be used in classrooms around the state. Several science teachers from the county attended and brought a good number of students.

The conference provided an opportunity to showcase to the public and policy makers the Tallapoosa River watershed and all the great things taking place to preserve the exceptional resource we have the privilege to enjoy. It was such a success that the second annual State of Our Watershed Conference has been scheduled for Camp ASCCA on 20-21 April 2006. Plans are to address the technical aspects of the project during Day One and host a WaterFest for kids on Day Two. More information concerning the agenda will be sent to members in March 2006. Please mark your calendars and join us at ASCCA on 20-21 April 2006.

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Dan Gilliland. And speaking of Camp ASCCA, Dan Gilliland resigned as their Environmental Director in November. He and Paulina moved to the Birmingham area where Dan is actively seeking employment in the environmental field. At last report, he had several opportunities but is taking his time to find the right 'match'. A few weeks ago, several Lake Watch members took Dan and Paulina to dinner and presented him with an appreciation plaque for all the hard work he put into the camp and for his close friendship with Lake Watch. We wish them a great future.

Middle Tallapoosa Clean Water Partnership committee (MTCWP). The MTCWP continues to grow and improve its ability to represent a variety of stakeholders who appreciate the valuable economic and recreational assets of Lake Martin and the river basin upstream to Lake Harris. The committee was organized 5 years ago by Don McClellan, former Mayor of Alexander City and has taken on extended life under Mayor Barbara Young who has continued the strong financial commitment from Alexander City.

The first major project was to prepare a watershed management plan that would identify areas of concern and serve as the fundamental source for action steps to address future problems concerning water quality within the middle Tallapoosa watershed. The project was undertaken by John Glasier and was completed with great skill late last year.

Recently the committee elected Chairman Tommy Futral (County Extension Agent), Vice Chairman Gerard Brewer (Alexander City Engineer), and Secretary-Treasurer Dick Bronson (Lake Watch). At the last committee meeting on 6 December, Tammy Jones was hired part-time as the Coordinator, an important move that will ensure continuity of actions identified in the watershed management plan. The committee has also approved a set of By-Laws and Articles of Incorporation that will be sent to the IRS for certification as a tax-exempt 501(c)(3) organization.

It is no exaggeration to state that the MTCWP committee is destined to be the leading proponent for future management of water resources in the area. For example, committee funding has been provided to Auburn University's Department of Fisheries for fish and macroinvertebrate studies of streams within the watershed. This data will be combined with the huge amount of information obtained from the Tallapoosa Watershed Project (discussed earlier) to better assess how water quality is affected by land use.

The MTCWP has also funded small local projects that demonstrate simple but effective ways to improve water quality. With the help of school kids, three rain gardens were constructed in Alexander City that help filter contaminants found in run-off from parking lots and streets. Also funded by the MTCWP are two stream restoration projects, one in Alexander City and one in Dadeville, along with a constructed wetlands project underway at the SportsPlex.

It is anticipated that the MTCWP will coordinate a variety of actions that will benefit the watershed, including an annual Lake Martin Clean-up, several environmental education projects with local schools, and the WaterFest project during Day Two of the annual *State of Our Watershed Conference* mentioned earlier.

In short, the Middle Tallapoosa Clean Water Partnership promises to be the conduit between stakeholders and organizations like Lake Watch and policy makers to preserve and improve Lake Martin...sometimes referred to as the "economic engine of the future for central Alabama". It is clear that participating in such partnerships is the wave of the future, and Lake Watch will certainly be a part of those efforts.

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A special time of the year. On behalf of the Lake Watch board of directors, a Merry Christmas and Happy New Year is extended to all members and their families. See you next year.

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# Lake Watch

of Lake Martin

Newsletter No. 36  
15 July 2006  
www.lakewatch.org

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Since my last newsletter was printed in green (it was Christmas time) and it's now the middle of summer, some of you may have thought I'd dropped off the face of the earth. Nope...just getting motivated and waiting for closure on some news items below. But the news remains a moving target, so I'll go with what I have.

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**Water Wars update.** As reported earlier, the federally mandated compacts that required Alabama, Georgia and Florida to negotiate the use of waters of the Alabama-Coosa-Tallapoosa (ACT) river basin and the Appalachian-Chattahoochee-Flint (ACF) river basin expired two years ago when the three governors decided their states could fare better in court. Since then, at least three lawsuits have been winding their way through various courts and a number of agencies and organizations have attempted to add their legal challenges to those already being considered.

In the most recent legal proceedings, Judge Karon Bowdre, US District Court, Northern District of Alabama, began a series of hearings in April to deal with issues regarding both the ACT and ACF systems. After denying a number of motions from several players she appointed a former judge from California to mediate the case.

Then in June, the US Army Corps of Engineers began releasing what the State of Georgia deemed excessive water from four reservoirs in the ACF basin to meet minimum flow requirements in Florida to protect fish and mussels covered by the federal Endangered Species Act. That action resulted in threats of a lawsuit by Georgia and a request from Florida for a temporary restraining order.

In late June, Judge Bowdre held more hearings to hammer out a deal on the ACF. After several meetings and a confusing series of almost daily flow changes, an interim deal was reached that all three states say they can live with while working on a more permanent agreement. Judge Bowdre set another hearing for 24 July to determine whether the states have reached final agreement. That's where we are at press time.

But don't hold your breath in hopes of quick results. The fight over water rights in the ACT and ACF river basins has been ongoing for 16 years and not many people are optimistic about a settlement any time soon. It's pretty clear that when state and federal agencies are fighting each other over water rights and then add in the big and thirsty city named Atlanta, court cases will take several years to get sorted out. Probably the only people happy with the situation are the attorneys. One wag described the water wars as a perpetual retirement program for lawyers. And to give credence to that comment, I counted 52 of them on the notification list for the judge's first mediation meeting.

In the meantime, two related federal cases are pending in DC Circuit and the 11<sup>th</sup> Circuit. I'll provide updates as information becomes available; however, it's now much tougher to follow the bouncing ball. Whereas Lake Watch representatives participated in virtually

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all of the ACT and ACF negotiation meetings, there is now little opportunity for public involvement...one of the downsides to allowing the compacts to expire. But however the cases end up, it's clear the issue of water rights in the two river basins will ultimately be settled by the US Supreme Court.

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**Water shortage.** On a related theme, the southeastern part of the country is experiencing a serious shortage of rain, maybe due to changing weather patterns (can you say, "global warming"?). This is adversely affecting several key reservoir levels, particularly in north Georgia, and is renewing their interest in finding reliable new water sources. It doesn't take a rocket scientist to recognize that rivers originating in Georgia and flowing into Alabama look more and more enticing to our friends to the east. And the lack of rain is beginning to affect the Tallapoosa River watershed and Lake Martin. If we don't get relief soon the lake may not stay close to full pool this year.

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**Tallapoosa Watershed Project (TWP).** For those who wonder what Lake Watch has been doing the past two years, see our website at [www.lakewatch.org](http://www.lakewatch.org) and click on the new menu item entitled "**research**". This will link you directly to Auburn University's Tallapoosa Watershed Project website at [www.twp.auburn.edu](http://www.twp.auburn.edu). Once you open this great website, a number of selections are available to explore. For starters, see the 2005 TWP report highlighted in red and the 2004 TWP report found under "**publications**".

You might also check the menu item entitled "**extension**" to read about the two successful annual watershed conferences held at Camp ASCCA's environmental center. Both conferences were expertly coordinated by Eric Reutebuch who is with Auburn University's Fisheries Department. The overall project director is Dr. Bill Deutsch, our mentor with Alabama Water Watch for so many years.

Lake Watch has been a key collaborator in the federally funded three-year project since it began. During 2004 we conducted extensive scientific testing on Lake Martin and the watershed upstream to Harris Dam at Wedowee. Last year the various teams concentrated on Lake Harris and the upper watershed. This year is devoted to data analysis and looking at ways to use the data to improve water quality in our watershed.

For the third year, John Glasier and I will continue sampling 5 sites around the upper end of Lake Martin. John will be fine-tuning his low-cost hyperspectral system that has proven so capable of accurately mapping critical levels of chlorophyll *a* which is an excellent indicator of watershed loading of nutrients (phosphorus and nitrogen). I'll use the reliable LaMotte chemical test kit. And since the Alabama Department of Environmental Management will conduct additional monitoring on the lake this year, we'll be doing side-by-side monitoring with them. Results will be posted on the TWP website.

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**Submerged tree salvage.** Readers may recall a report here in 2004 about an individual who was seeking a permit from Alabama Power Company to salvage trees from the bottom of Lake Martin. Lake Watch initially expressed environmental concerns because of possible re-suspension of bottom sediment that might contain toxic substances from upstream agricultural operations many years ago. There were also concerns that fish

habitat would be adversely impacted and that disturbed trees could later rise to the surface and pose boating hazards.

Alabama Power Company, who owns the land forming the lakebed and has approval authority, considered the objections and met with the salvagers. A pilot project was approved to raise 20 trees to determine if salvage operations were feasible. I was invited to observe the operations, so two weeks ago Mary Ann and I watched them bring up three trees. Since then I've participated in helping them raise the desired 20 trees.

It's an interesting but labor-intensive operation. When construction of Martin Dam began, an effort was made to eliminate trees from sticking up above the surface once the lake filled. Logging crews cut trees a few hundred feet downhill from the full-pool elevation marks and left many of them on the lakebed either tied down with chains and cables or placed in piles. Those trees are still there and are well preserved because of the cold water and lack of sunlight. Many are old growth heart pine trees so prized for home flooring and furniture.

The trees are initially located with a grappling hook (later they may use side-looking radar techniques). Once a solid "hook" is made, a scuba diver goes down to verify proper tree type and size and then attaches a chain and electric winch cable. We watched the two-man crew working in 60-70 feet of water raise a pine tree 50-ft long that had several large branches still intact. After trimming the branches, the tree was chained beneath a pontoon barge to be transported back to the shore where eventually a crane will load them on a trailer for transport to a lumber mill. On another day I watched them raise a pine tree 82-ft long that had been felled with an axe. I have a photo of the tree end and it's clear the lumberjack who cut the tree knew his trade as witnessed by the extremely deep and uniform cut marks. Several trees had burn marks, probably from forest fires many years ago or attempts to burn them after being cut down.

Consider this: The trees were probably 60 to 80 years old when they were cut and have been on the lakebed another 80+ years. *They were seedlings during the Civil War.*

One of the main problems in processing this wood is to find a kiln that can dry the lumber properly. Otherwise, the wood will split and be unusable. I have a few small limb pieces drying in my garage. I've cut some 5-inch x 1/2-inch coasters and the grain is beautiful, although normal drying will likely cause small cracks.

Now that the agreed number of trees has been raised and moved to the shore, the salvagers will contact a lumber mill, dry and cut the trees, and do a market evaluation. In the meantime, Lake Watch collected samples of sediment from some of the salvaged trees and had tests conducted by Auburn University's Soils Laboratory. Those tests found nothing that should give us concern about potential environmental impact.

Ultimately Alabama Power Company will decide whether to grant a permit for further tree salvage. Although the jury is still out, I suspect the salvagers will be given the green light later this year. The salvagers plan to market the logs to lumber companies and hope

to track a portion of the finished product and document its use in homes on Lake Martin. We've suggested that sufficient wood be used to construct objects (maybe park benches with appropriate brass plaques) and donate them to communities around the lake. This would commemorate the fact that the wood is a unique piece of history.

As an aside, the two salvagers are the same individuals who worked several years raising parts of a World War II Mitchell B-25 bomber that crashed in the Sandy Creek area of Lake Martin in early 1945. Three crew members were killed in the crash. Salvage operations on the plane ceased around 1997 after raising both engines, one propeller, and other parts. Much of the remainder of the plane remains on the lakebed covered with silt. During the salvage operations on the plane, both divers established a close relationship with survivors of the deceased crew and have considered writing a book about their experiences. I'll have more to report on this in the next newsletter.

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**Living Streams.** Lake Watch volunteers conducted a number of *Living Streams* programs this spring at Camp ASCCA beginning with our favorite group of fifth-graders from St. James School in Montgomery. Principal Jim Terry and Counselor Clare Dixon were discussing how many years Lake Watch had worked with their students...our best guess was ten years and probably close to 900 kids. Each year Clare sends us a number of thank-you notes from students and we have them displayed in a scrapbook. Wow...talk about great kids, excellent artists and writers, supportive parents, and wonderful faculty! It's a genuine treat for us to work with the school and we wouldn't miss it for anything.

We also conducted programs for several local schools, including students from Horseshoe Bend School, Dadeville and Alexander City. And on two separate days Lake Watch volunteers presented *Living Streams* programs to 290 Radney School 5<sup>th</sup>-graders during a "Field Day for Water Quality" event organized by County Agent Tommy Futral.

And finally, Lake Watch assisted Fletcher Scott, science teacher at Benjamin Russell High School in Alexander City, when he field tested a pilot program for the *Living Streams* curriculum being adapted by Auburn University for use in public schools state-wide. This will institutionalize the *Living Streams* environmental education program we've conducted the past 10 years for nearly 3500 kids.

None of the *Living Streams* programs would be possible without the great help from volunteers Mary Ann Bronson, John Glasier, David & Diana French, Bill Stewart, Dick Duncan, Tom Collier, Judy Palfrey and Tammy Jones. Thanks folks! And kudos to Josh Rhodes, Camp ASCCA Environmental Director, for getting two full-time staff people (Heather White and Nathan Waters) certified in *Living Streams* procedures.

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**Lake Cleanup.** Two lake cleanups sponsored by the Middle Tallapoosa Clean Water Partnership Committee were held on Lake Martin during the past year. The first was on Saturday 15 October 2005 and used 10 collection sites around the lake that yielded a mountain of litter. The second cleanup on Saturday 13 May 2006 had a more modest goal of cleaning several large islands on the lake's north end. Although the nasty weather

forced us off the lake after an hour, we still managed to pick up 2-1/2 tons of litter mostly left by campers who seem unable...or unwilling...to clean up after themselves.

The next cleanup is scheduled for **Saturday 30 September 2006** from 8:00 AM to noon. Three collection points will be located at **DARE Park, Union boat ramp, and the Coley Creek boat ramp** on the far north end of the lake. Lake Watch members are encouraged to get their neighbors and friends out on the lake to help keep our lake beautiful. Watch for flyers at marinas and local stores...and mark your calendars.

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**Global Water Watch.** Over a dozen Global Water Watch people from six countries were at Auburn University in late May for the second annual water conference. Their last major event was a day with Lake Watch. Water quality experts from Mexico, Peru, Spain, Brazil, Argentina and Guatemala visited Camp ASCCA, then on to a stream near Newsite where they participated in a *Living Streams* demonstration with kids from Horseshoe Bend School. The rest of the day and evening was spent at the Bronson's home with Lake Watch board members. They enjoyed a meal, many trips down our water slide, some wild rides on the jet ski, and even more wild rides on the tubes.

Through the years we've been privileged to host a number of guests from other countries, and each time it seems it couldn't get any better. But it does. Bill Deutsch put it best a few days ago when he said, *"Participants were moved to tears with the beauty of the place and people. We collectively showed the participants the best of the US and what working together can really mean. Our image as a country is seriously tarnished by the media of other places (to say nothing of TV and movies), so it was great for our international guests to see us for themselves. Many were transformed."* ...'nuf said.

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**Remembrances.** Please take a few moments to reflect on the lives of some members of our Lake Watch family who died during the past few months.

- **Bill Crim** was one of our long-standing members. A retired Army Lieutenant Colonel, Bill was a valued member of several civic and church organizations in the local community.
- **Rosemary Turner** was also a military veteran, having served several years in the Marine Corps during the Vietnam era. Rosemary and Skip were strong advocates of protecting Lake Martin.
- **Willa Tippit**, the mother of Sharon Glasier, died recently in Miami. Sharon spent many meaningful days visiting her Mom during her long illness.
- **Daniel Holland**, although not a member of Lake Watch, was the youngest son of close Army friends of the Bronsons. He was a Lieutenant Colonel in the US Army and was killed by a roadside bomb in Iraq. The Bronsons attended his military funeral recently at the National Cemetery at Fort Sam Houston, Texas.

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**Membership.** Lake Watch membership continues at a comfortable 300 and, even with continuing our mini-grant program to local science teachers, we will still retain nearly \$5000 in our treasury. So to apologize for sending tardy due slips and to thank all of you for your loyal membership, I've extended your due dates a few months. Call it a bonus.

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# Lake Watch

of Lake Martin

Newsletter No. 37  
26 December 2006  
[www.lakewatch.org](http://www.lakewatch.org)

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There are some important items to report before the new year begins...so here goes.

**Remembrance.** Long time Lake Watch member Dan Ryan died earlier this month. Dan and Alys were the first residents of StillWaters to join us and were in the first group to be trained as volunteer water quality monitors, testing for several years off their dock. Dan will be remembered as a true gentleman and former FBI agent who was our resident pit bull on water pollution issues in StillWaters. Our sincerest condolences go to Alys.

**Annual meeting.** More than 65 people attended our fifteenth annual meeting on Sunday 24 September 2006 at the Elks Lodge on the lake.

The Woodfin Martin award was presented to Tommy Futral in recognition of his continued involvement in a number of environmental education programs for children. Tommy has teamed with Lake Watch for several years to include our *Living Streams* program in his forestry events, much to the benefit of hundreds of children each year. Thanks Tommy for a great job!

Following a short business meeting, the audience was treated to an interesting program by Bob Norwood and Ben Dugger who spoke on the topic, "*Diving in Lake Martin for Logs, Planes and Other Stuff*". Bob and Ben recently obtained a permit from Alabama Power Company to salvage submerged logs from the lake bottom and they described their diving procedures and showed pieces of wood already salvaged. (A more detailed description of the operation is found in previous newsletter number 36). They also described their efforts over a period of several years in the mid-90's while salvaging parts of the WWII B-25 bomber that crashed in the Sandy Creek area of Lake Martin in 1945. They brought a few pieces of the plane and showed photos of their experiences.

Equally interesting were the pieces of early diving equipment they displayed, including a metal helmet with glass windows that required a heavy suit and air hose. Our older members will remember going to movies and watching with horror the huge octopus and shark attacks on divers seeking sunken gold treasures...and always an episode where the bad guys cut the air hose.

As mentioned in my previous newsletter, I assisted in some of the recent log salvage operations and enjoyed seeing the large pieces of history come to the surface to ultimately be used for others' enjoyment. The unusually mild weather in early December gave the divers a great window of opportunity to perfect their techniques and make plans for full salvage efforts beginning next spring. I hope to be there as a volunteer deckhand.

**Outstanding Alabama Water.** One of the most important projects that Lake Watch has undertaken got its start last month when a letter was sent to the Director, Alabama Department of Environmental Management requesting consideration to upgrade the use

classification of Lake Martin to Outstanding Alabama Water (OAW). OAW is the highest use classification that can be awarded in the state and is reserved for special bodies of water. The stated criteria in ADEM regulations is as follows:

*“High quality waters that constitute an outstanding Alabama resource, such as waters of state parks and wildlife refuges and waters of exceptional recreational or ecological significance, may be considered for classification as an Outstanding Alabama Water.”*

I believe that anyone who has experienced the clean waters of Lake Martin will agree that the lake fits the above description quite well. In addition, there are a number of water quality studies and reports that support the request, including the detailed Tallapoosa Watershed Project that Lake Watch was involved in during the past three years.

Preliminary contact with ADEM officials indicates that Lake Martin is a good candidate for OAW classification and would be the first large body of water in the state to be so designated. Only a handful of stream segments have attained OAW status.

The benefits of attaining OAW status are obvious and would likely have strong support from those working to improve the economic future of this part of the state. For example, consider the advantages of marketing a lake that is recognized as not only the cleanest in the state but has been singled out for special protection policies. This would be a marketer's dream from many aspects, whether real estate, retirement, tourism, or just plain quality of life emphasis.

Of course, attaining OAW status isn't only about using water quality studies and data to support the project. There will be several important requirements of those municipalities that hold permits to discharge wastewater into the Lake Martin watershed. Once OAW is attained, a three-year clock starts that will allow dischargers time to assess their treatment systems and determine if upgrades are required to meet the more stringent minimum treatment requirements for toxicity, pathogens, and dissolved oxygen. Also, no new or expanded point-source discharges would be allowed unless a thorough evaluation of treatment and disposal techniques demonstrates that there are no feasible alternatives to discharge into the OAW-classified waters.

While the above requirements could put a strain on some communities, the end result will reinforce the saying we've voiced before, that Lake Martin is the economic engine that will drive the future economy in central Alabama...and anything done to protect and improve this economic resource is worth doing.

Obviously there is much work to be done to attain OAW status and it won't happen overnight. ADEM staff believe a 2-3 year timeframe is reasonable. So stay tuned.

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**Martin Dam Relicensing.** Alabama Power Company is entering into the lengthy process of relicensing Martin Dam that the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission requires every 50 years. The current FERC license expires on 8 June 2013 and APC has begun a

series of meetings to gather information from stakeholders in order to identify and resolve issues before the application is submitted. This is an extremely important process and should be of strong interest to all Lake Watch members.

Representatives from Lake Watch, the Coalition of Associations at Lake Martin (CALM), and the Middle Tallapoosa Clean Water Partnership met several times recently with APC officials to express our positions on issues, including lake levels, water quality, shoreline development and land preservation. These issues and many others voiced to APC by stakeholders around the state have been consolidated into a CD-ROM (Preliminary Information Document) that provides a huge amount of information about the lake and river basin as well as the relicensing process. A copy of the CD can be obtained by calling APC at (205) 257-2211 or email at [vjackson@southernco.com](mailto:vjackson@southernco.com).

There will be ample opportunity for citizens to participate in the process, whether in person or through their representatives. The first public workshops to provide a forum for identification and discussion of issues will be hosted by APC on **Tuesday 30 January 2007** at the Betty Carol Graham Center, CACC, in Alexander City. Two workshops are scheduled on that date: the first at **10:00AM - 2:00PM**, and the second in the **evening at 6:30 - 9:30**. All are encouraged to attend and participate in the process. Lake Watch is attempting to get another workshop scheduled later that week in the Dadeville area, so watch the local papers for an announcement.

Remember.....those who follow us will live with the provisions of the new license for 50 years, so we need to get it right.

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**Membership.** Many thanks to those of you who responded with your annual dues. I have enclosed reminder slips of renewal dates...our year-end treasury balance is \$5995. And remember your donations are tax-exempt, so if anyone wishes a statement of same for tax purposes, please let me know.

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**Reflections.** As Lake Watch enters its 16<sup>th</sup> year (we began meeting in 1991, selected the name in 1992, and incorporated 501(c)(3) in 1994) it's natural to reflect on where we've been and where we're going. The organization has been successful in establishing a reputation as a strong advocate for clean water, whether in Lake Martin or statewide. We have established a great record for environmental education to kids. However, being an advocate means occasionally going against the grain and creating a bit of controversy. And of course that happened.

But the heartwarming thing is...we've slowly but surely become true partners for a clean environment with most of those with whom we had conflicts in the past. And I guess that's the message for all of us this time of year. Merry Christmas and Happy New Year.

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Newsletter No. 38  
30 September 2007  
[www.lakewatch.org](http://www.lakewatch.org)



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Several important things have happened that members should know about, and it's way past time for a newsletter...guess it has something to do with the term "procrastination" I also want to let members know of the annual meeting.

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**Annual Lake Watch meeting.** The annual meeting will be held on Sunday 14 October 2007 in the Camp ASCCA dining hall. We'll have a business meeting at 12:30, lunch at 1:00 PM, followed by a short program. The program will consist of speakers on three topics: a progress report on the logging of submerged trees from Lake Martin, an update on environmental legislation expected in the Alabama Legislature next year, and a discussion of the newly formed Lake Martin Home Owner-Boat Owner Association (more on this organization below).

Members are encouraged to attend and bring a friend. Since the lunch is catered, we need an accurate count of attendees. **Please call (256) 825-9353 or (256) 825-1942 for meal reservations and direction to Camp ASCCA.** Remember, the lunch is free, the scenery even better, and the company priceless! See you there.

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**Dadeville wastewater treatment plant:** When the Middle Tallapoosa Clean Water Partnership stakeholder committee completed their Watershed Management Plan in 2004, it included a list of potential problem areas that could adversely affect water quality in Lake Martin. High on the list of concerns were point source discharges, including the Dadeville wastewater treatment plant that had a history of permit problems.

Things might have coasted along for a while except for the announcement early this year that a corn ethanol plant was being planned for the Dadeville industrial park. Because the ethanol plant would discharge a sizable amount of wastewater into the municipal treatment plant, more attention was given to treatment plant operations.

Lake Watch representatives conducted a file review at the Alabama Department of Environmental Management and discovered 29 Notice of Violation letters issued by ADEM since 1992 citing violations for fecal coliform, suspended solids, ammonia nitrogen, residual chlorine, dissolved oxygen, and pH. This information is important because the discharge from the treatment plant ultimately ends up in the Sandy Creek portion of Lake Martin.

After meeting with Dadeville officials, it became clear that legal pressure was required. Attorney David Ludder (formerly with the Legal Environmental Assistance Foundation) was retained as counsel, and in March a 60-day letter of intent to sue was sent to the City on behalf of Lake Watch. That got things rolling. Two legal actions quickly followed against Dadeville. ADEM filed a Consent Order that included a monetary penalty and specific requirements to address the problems with the treatment plant, and the Alabama Attorney General filed a civil complaint for a variety of water quality permit violations.

The issue became more heated when a number of citizens, including Lake Watch, wrote to ADEM requesting a public hearing. The hearing was held at Dadeville High School in June and more than 100 people attended. At least two-dozen attendees spoke against the city's failure to protect the lake; none spoke in their defense. The hearing resulted in written assurances from ADEM that strong measures would be required of the city to correct problems with the plant and associated sewer lines.

In the meantime, ADEM billed the city \$3570 for the cost of the hearing, whereupon the city asked Lake Watch for reimbursement. Our response was to decline, pointing out that many people besides Lake Watch had requested the hearing and the city was solely responsible because of repeated permit violations over a fifteen-year period.

At press time the city is considering a plan to upgrade the existing 30-year old plant. We have met with city officials and suggested several alternatives including a package plant, newer technology such as membrane filtration, or piping the city's wastewater to the Sugar Creek wastewater treatment plant in Alexander City. We believe the Sugar Creek option has merit because it would take advantage of an existing treatment plant that is in excellent condition and is underutilized because of loss of wastewater and revenue from Russell Corporation when they moved their operations offshore.

The Dadeville situation is reminiscent of the long-lasting battle Lake Watch had several years ago concerning the Sugar Creek plant. It took many meetings and ideas to finally get things on the right track, and it is our hope that the City of Dadeville will ultimately react the same way as Alexander City.

The situation has also been a reminder of how important Lake Martin is to the economy of central Alabama and how quickly things can change. Which is a great segue into my next topic...the Home Owners/Boat Owners Association of Lake Martin.

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**Lake Martin HOBO Association.** Since 1992 when Lake Watch was formed, there have been occasional questions about its mission, particularly with getting the organization involved in traditional matters of interest to lake homeowners. The standard answer has been that our IRS charter for 501(c)(3) tax-exempt status is for a very specific reason, that is, to focus on water quality issues. And we've been pretty successful in staying within that narrow scope. However, the answer wasn't always satisfactory.

Now comes a new organization that should satisfy all of us. The Lake Martin Home Owner/Boat Owner Association was organized in June 2007 and at press time is over 1000 members. The HOBOS have a full spectrum of lake homeowner related interests including lake levels, shoreline preservation, boating safety, zoning, recreation, and of course...**water quality**. Since several Lake Watch members were involved in the initial formation of the organization, it was only natural that the HOBOS would turn to Lake Watch because of our expertise in water quality and environmental matters: Lake Watch has agreed to chair the Lake Martin HOBO Environmental/Water Quality Committee and will report regularly to their Board of Directors and general membership.

In my opinion this comes close to the perfect marriage. We are now partners with an organization that is fast becoming the voice of those who are full time or occasional users of Lake Martin or who depend on the lake for their livelihood. This is win-win for Lake Watch and Lake Martin HOBOS.

HERE IS THE IMPORTANT PART. Lake Martin HOBOS Association has proposed a free one-year membership to current Lake Watch members in exchange for permission to include those names in their membership database. Two membership fee options are being considered. Option One would be that, after one free year, Lake Watch members could remain with both Lake Watch and HOBOS by paying a reduced combined rate that would be split between the two organizations. Option Two would have Lake Watch pay an annual organizational fee and all members would maintain automatic membership in HOBOS. And of course Lake Watch members would have the option of withdrawing from HOBOS at any time.

**>>> We'll discuss this topic at our annual meeting on 14 October and seek a vote on the proposal, so please give it some serious thought. If you can't attend the annual meeting but have an opinion of the matter, please drop me an email at [dbronson@charter.net](mailto:dbronson@charter.net).**

For more information on the Lake Martin HOBOS, see [www.lakemartin.org](http://www.lakemartin.org).

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**Outstanding Alabama Water (OAW)**. As discussed in a previous newsletter, Lake Watch is seeking special status for Lake Martin through the assignment of Outstanding Alabama Water designation by the Alabama Department of Environmental Management. OAW is the highest water quality classification possible from the state, one held by no other reservoir or lake in Alabama.

We have formally requested that ADEM consider Lake Martin for OAW and have received assurances from the Director that the consideration process will begin soon. In the meantime we are seeking letters of support from influential individuals and agencies who might assist us during the final rulemaking process.

Obtaining such classification would be a huge factor in protecting the lake by raising the bar for water quality standards and would ensure a clean and beautiful lake for generations to come. We believe we have a solid chance at success in obtaining OAW and will keep you posted on progress.

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**Membership**. Membership remains at approximately 300 and our treasury at a comfortable \$4200. And since I've been a bit tardy with dues notification...ok, ok, I'm real late!...we've changed due dates by adding several months to your membership.

Now you can't hardly get a better deal than that! Frankly, that's the least we can do for your loyalty to Lake Watch. Thanks! And we'll look for you at the annual meeting at ASCCA on **Sunday 14 October. Remember, please call us if you plan to attend.**

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Newsletter No. 39  
15 May 2008  
[www.lakewatch.org](http://www.lakewatch.org)



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The lake is full, life is good, and there is plenty of news to share. So here goes.

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**Annual Meeting.** The 16<sup>th</sup> annual meeting of Lake Watch was held at Camp ASCCA on Lake Martin on Sunday 14 October 2007. Approximately 50 people enjoyed an excellent meal served by the ASCCA dining hall staff.

Two new board members were approved by unanimous vote...**Dave Heinzen** and **Matt Campbell**. One filled a board vacancy that had been unfilled for a couple of years and the other was to fill a vacancy created when **Judy Palfrey** chose not to remain on the board after two terms. Judy was an outstanding board member who helped on many projects and was a great Lake Watch ambassador. Thanks Judy!

This brings the total number on the board to eleven: **John Glasier** (VP), **Virginia Pietrzykowski** (Sec/Treas), **John Bishop**, **Kathryn Braund**, **Matt Campbell**, **Tom Collier**, **Dick Duncan**, **John Durr**, **Diana French**, **Dave Heinzen**, and myself.

We had a good discussion about the relationship between Lake Watch and the Lake Martin Home Owner and Boat Owner Association. There was no support for joint membership, either at a reduced combined rate or an organizational fee arrangement. Too complicated. Nor was there any support for future merger discussions between the two organizations. It was strongly agreed by the members present and by **Jesse Cunningham**, HOBOPresident during his excellent remarks, that both groups have greater strength and influence by remaining separate. And that's exactly what we'll do.

Attendees heard remarks from **Adam Snyder** about the newly named organization **Conservation Alabama** and their efforts to get positive legislation passed in Montgomery on behalf of many environmental groups. Lake Watch has long been a supporter of their efforts when they were called the Alabama League of Environmental Action Voters (Ala LEAVs). We applaud their work...and the name change.

We also enjoyed remarks from **Bob Norwood** and **Ben Dugger** who gave an update on their submerged tree salvage operations on the lake. They showed samples of the finished heart pine and oak flooring...beautiful, particularly when you consider that some of the trees they have brought to the surface were nearly 200 years old when they were cut and that was more than 80 years ago before the lake began filling.

Recent conversations with Bob & Ben reveal they are working feverishly on building a larger barge for more efficient operations. They have glowing reports about how their new side-looking sonar system has worked during practice runs. Their intent is to map the lake bottom to see exactly where the best and largest trees are located. And as I did last year, I hope to spend some time with them this summer & fall as an untrained but eager volunteer deck hand. That is, if I can put up with Ben's bad...really bad... jokes.

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**Woodfin Martin Award.** Former board member and long-time water quality monitor **Larry Locke** was selected to receive the annual award in recognition of his dedication to the principles of Lake Watch. Larry is a retired teacher, a staunch advocate for cleaner water, and a quiet person unafraid to take on the 'power structure' when other avenues fail to work. The award was presented to Larry a few days ago in the presence of his wife Cynthia and two grandchildren.

*For those who didn't know Wood Martin, he was a founding member of Lake Watch, a quiet but faithful supporter of the organization, a Scout leader, and an excellent and habitual wood carver who was voted "Mr. Lake Martin" before his death in 1995.*

**Lake's up!** After the worst drought in history, who would have thought we'd be within a few inches of full pool by mid-spring? Certainly not me...or anyone else I know. Of course we had sufficient rain that helped tremendously, and Alabama Power Company chose to limit electric power generation for an extended period, thus filling the lake faster than normal. APCo deserves a lot of credit for listening to citizen concerns and doing what most thought was impossible this year.

The past several months have seen increased interest in changing lake levels to create more opportunity for recreational use and provide a much-needed stimulus to the local economy. Rather than the normal lake draw down that begins soon after Labor Day, many want consideration of the following general changes:

- Don't pull the plug until later in the fall
- Keep the lake a bit fuller in the winter
- Begin filling the lake earlier in the spring

This would take advantage of the best boating time in the fall and would give a real shot in the arm to general lake use. Although computer modeling for pool level changes shows that it can be done, there are still some downstream concerns about possible springtime flooding because of less floodwater storage capacity in the reservoir. This topic has great interest from citizens involved in the Martin Dam relicensing process that arguably is the most important event concerning Lake Martin in the next 40-50 years. Which leads us to the next piece.

**Martin Dam Relicensing Update** (by John Glasier). The Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) renewed Alabama Power Company's operating license for the Martin Project on May 11, 1978 (first issued January 1, 1927). This license will expire on June 8, 2013. While 2013 may seem far away, APCo must complete a multi-year consultation process with various stakeholders, State and Federal agencies and file an application for a new operating license with FERC by June 8, 2011 in order to continue generating electricity beyond 2013. For many of us, this will be the last opportunity in our lifetime to help shape the future operation of Martin including desirable pool-level 'rule curve' changes and needed shoreline management improvements.

In January 2007, APCo initiated preliminary relicensing efforts through a series of informal meetings with stakeholders and energy representatives in order to meet FERC prescribed deadlines. They're using FERC's Integrated Licensing Process to develop the



new license. To that end, members of Lake Watch's Board of Directors have been fully engaged with APCo representatives and their contracted subject matter experts from Kleinschmidt Energy and Water Resource Consultants involved with relicensing. Through these meetings, APCo has solicited input on the key issues that should be addressed in the next license.

In September 2007 and April 2008, APCo hosted two-day meetings for groups focused on five general areas of concern...these groups are called Martin Issue Groups or MIGs:

- MIG 1 – Fish and Wildlife
- MIG 2 - Water Quality and Quantity
- MIG 3 – Project Operations
- MIG 4 – Shoreline Operations
- MIG 5 – Recreation (and related socio-economic impacts)

From these issue group meetings, fifteen study plans were drafted to analyze prospective impacts from changes in project operations and related management provisions that may eventually be codified in the next license. Project operations have been the center of attention during these meetings. Changes to the seasonal trend of Martin's pool elevation reflected by flood control and operating guide curves have dominated discussions during most of these meetings.

For several years Lake Watch has urged APCo to seriously consider raising the lake's winter-pool level and extend the summer full-pool level through October. Since its inception last year, the Lake Martin Home Owner & Boat Owner Association (HOBO) also supported these changes. According to a recent HOBO survey, their members prefer a 5-ft higher winter-pool and extending the summer full-pool season into November.

APCo has agreed to consider the recommendations of Lake Watch and the HOBOs in their study of alternatives for changes to their operating guidelines. What's more, Lake Watch and the Alabama Water Watch Program Office at Auburn University have offered to assist APCo with water quality sampling and analyses during the study period. Lake Watch water quality data and findings from the recently completed Tallapoosa Watershed Project have been used in preliminary assessments and study plan development efforts by APCo's relicensing team. According to timelines for the integrated relicensing process, proposed studies will be conducted during 2009 and 2010.

On or before June 9 of this year, APCo will submit to FERC two key documents that formally initiate the relicensing process according to federal mandates. First is a Notice of Intent (NOI) letter indicating its intention to re-license the Martin Project. Accompanying the NOI is the Pre-Application Document (PAD) that brings together existing, relevant and reasonably available information about the Project and its effects on resources, as well as a well-defined process plan that sets the schedule for developing a list of preliminary studies and issues for a license application. Both documents must be filed at least 5 years before license expiration. A 30-day public review and comment period will commence once these documents are filed.

The next round of relicensing meetings will be hosted by FERC and will likely occur next September. Two good sources for additional information about Martin relicensing are APCo's website at [www.alabamapower.com/hydro/martin.asp](http://www.alabamapower.com/hydro/martin.asp) and the lake Martin HOBO website at [www.lakemartin.org](http://www.lakemartin.org). As always, Lake Watch will remain fully engaged throughout the relicensing process and report on progress along the way.

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**Living Streams**. Lake Watch continues to provide kids with environmental education programs at Camp ASCCA. First this year were 80 fifth-graders from St. James School (Montgomery). Next were 50 third-graders from Dean Road School (Auburn), followed in mid-April by 40 sixth-graders from Lee Scott Academy (Auburn). Each year the Lake Watch volunteers wonder how the kids could ever get any smarter, better mannered, and more enthusiastic. And each year they do. If only the world were run by the type of kids we work with.....well, you get the picture.

In the fall we will conduct *Living Streams* programs for all fifth-graders in Tallapoosa County...approximately 600 of them from five schools. We'll stretch it out over a month or so to give our volunteers time to recover.

Speaking of volunteers, we have a number of new ones who are helping with *Living Streams*: Tom & Pat Lynch, Harold & Bev Henry, Carey Mullican, and soon-to-be-certified Matt & Ann Campbell. And if the past 12 years is any gauge, we'll need all the volunteers we can get because the number of kids receiving the program will be right at **4000** by the end of the year.

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**Lake Clean-up**. The annual Renew Our Rivers lake clean-up is scheduled for **Saturday 7 June 2008** from 8:00 until noon. The event is sponsored by Alabama Power Company and is being coordinated by the Middle Tallapoosa Clean Water Partnership, with assistance from the Lake Martin HOBOS, Lake Watch, and LMRA.

Dumpsters will be located at DARE Park, the Alex City boat ramp on Coley Creek Road, Kowaliga Bridge, and Real Island Marina. We strongly encourage everyone who enjoys the beauty and cleanliness of Lake Martin to bring your boat to one of the sites and help transport others to out-of-the-way places for litter pick-up. Trash bags, gloves and drinking water will be provided at each dumpster site.

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**Board of Directors meeting**. The board met at the Bronson's home on Monday 5 May 2008. The Treasurer's report showed the fund balance at \$5431, with no large expenditures planned for the year. The agenda included two reports: one on the status of the Lake Watch request to ADEM to assign the water use designation of Outstanding Alabama Water to Lake Martin, and another on the status of the Dadeville wastewater treatment plant upgrade. (See the following two pieces below).

During the meeting, John Glasier stated that he would not seek re-election as Lake Watch Vice President when his extended term ends later this year but asked that he be considered for appointment as the Technical Advisor to the organization. This would take advantage of his extraordinary scientific background and allow him to remain

involved as a Lake Watch representative in several endeavors, including the Martin Dam relicensing process and two water quality studies of the lake and watershed. The board unanimously approved his request.

A nominating committee was formed to consider replacements for several vacancies: vice president and some anticipated board positions. John Glasier is chairman of the committee and can be reached at (256) 825-1942 if anyone has names to recommend. Please give this some thought and call John with your ideas.

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**Does Lake Martin Measure Up To Outstanding Alabama Water?** *(by John Glasier).*

During the recent Tallapoosa River Basin State of Our Watershed Conference, **Lynn Sisk** of ADEM's Water Quality Branch provided an update on the status of Lake Watch's request for OAW water use classification for Lake Martin. Lynn's answer was, in so many words, "maybe."

Since our initial correspondence with ADEM in November 2006, it seems as if little progress has been made toward a decision. Fortunately, Mr. Sisk was able to bring us up to date on what hurdles remain to be cleared. But he also gave us food for thought about potential consequences for such designation. It brought to mind the old adage, "be careful what you ask for."

It seems obvious that the title Outstanding Alabama Water would have immense appeal for just about everyone. Economic-value "marketers" of every bent would love to have this added to their sales pitches and billboards. Likewise, homeowners and recreational users could rightfully claim bragging rights for "their" cleanest lake in the state.

But what if only a portion of the lake was designated OAW? What about those areas around the lake that might not make the cut? Embayments in the upper regions of the lake beware! This is certainly a possibility given the decision criteria that ADEM must use in recommending OAW classification for a rule-making decision by the Alabama Environmental Management Commission.

The problem is that the rules established in 1992 for OAW classification were written for streams rather than lakes and reservoirs. So what to do? One possibility is to establish a new category called "Outstanding Alabama Lakes" with language and requirements that fit larger bodies of water. This seems to make sense and Lake Watch has encouraged ADEM to give this possibility strong consideration. And of course we would expect Lake Martin to be a natural candidate for first choice. In the meantime, we will continue pressing for special designation of the lake and will keep you informed of progress.

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**Dadeville Wastewater Treatment Plant.** There are still major concerns about the status of the plant. The city has sought grants and loans to upgrade the existing plant and appears to have reached their financial goal. They have submitted a request to ADEM for a new permit since the upgrade includes an increase in treatment capacity from 420 gpm to 750 gpm. This action automatically triggers a new permit requirement.

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Relaxing at the gulf beach for our annual Thanksgiving family gathering seems like a good time to start another newsletter with the latest news and to extend best wishes for a blessed Christmas and a prosperous new year. And in view of the financial mess the country is in, a special hope for better times ahead.

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1. Board meeting. The Board of Directors met at the Bronson's home on 22 October 2008. The Treasurer reported a balance of \$5434 with no major expenditures anticipated. Topics reported and discussed were:

- Dadeville wastewater treatment plant
  - A public hearing to hear comments on the renewal of the plant permit was conducted in Dadeville on 18 September 2008 by the Alabama Department of Environmental Management. The mayor and several town officials attended the hearing along with two-dozen members of Lake Watch and the Lake Martin Home Owners Association. Concerns were voiced for the record about whether proposed plant upgrades are sufficient to protect receiving streams and the lake from pollution.
  - Lake Watch representatives testified that a number of tests had been conducted on Chattasofka Creek during the past year that indicate the stream is already degraded below state use-classification standards and may be a candidate for listing on the federal 303(d) list of impaired waters. Should that occur it would require completion of a Total Maximum Daily Load study that would establish waste-load limits and set remedies for future protection of stream water quality. To date, ADEM has not responded to written comments from Lake Watch. Progress on the plant upgrade will continue to be monitored and reported.
- Town of Wadley wastewater treatment plant
  - As in the Dadeville case, a 60-day Notice of Intent to Sue was sent to the town of Wadley in June 2008. Attorney David Ludder filed the action on behalf of Lake Watch because of inaction by the town to correct repeated instances where municipal and industrial pollution from the town sewage lagoon adversely affected the nearby Tallapoosa River and ultimately Lake Martin. The decision to proceed was prompted by fish kills and other information found in ADEM files spanning several years.
  - Shortly thereafter a suit was filed against Wadley by ADEM and the Alabama Attorney General for numerous violations of federal water quality standards. That suit pre-empts further legal recourse by Lake Watch unless the town fails to take appropriate corrective action.
- Officer and board changes
  - John Glasier announced that he wished to step down as Vice President and assume duties as Technical Advisor, while Diana French and John Bishop asked to be replaced after serving multiple and very active terms on the

board. The Board reluctantly agreed and will nominate the following replacements at the annual meeting next week: Tom Collier (Vice President), Dave Heinzen (Board) and Jim Anckersen (Board).

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2. Annual meeting. The 16<sup>th</sup> annual meeting was held on Sunday 26 October 2008 at the Elks Lodge on Lake Martin with a nice turnout of members and guests. The location was particularly fitting because it was there that Drs. Bill Deutsch and Bill Davies conducted the first water quality monitoring workshop for Lake Watch members in 1992.

- Elections (nominations from the Board of Directors)
  - Tom Collier was elected Vice President. Tom retired two years ago as Camp ASCCA Director and now works there part-time on environmental matters.
  - Dave Heinzen and Jim Anckersen were elected to the Board of Directors. Both bring a wealth of experience in environmental matters and are long-standing members of Lake Watch.
  - This brings the board to ten: Jim Anckersen, Kathryn Braund, Dick Bronson (President), Matt Campbell, Tom Collier (Vice President), Dick Duncan, John Durr, Dave Heinzen, Tom Lynch, and Virginia Peitrzykowski (Secretary-Treasurer). John Glasier will advise the board on technical matters.
- Dadeville and Wadley wastewater treatment plants. An update was provided on the status of legal actions (see paragraph 1 above).
- Martin Dam re-licensing. The process continues through a number of study projects funded by Alabama Power Company that will enhance future protection of the lake and watershed. Lake Watch representatives are fully engaged and will report progress.
- Outstanding Alabama Water. Lake Watch representatives continue to work with ADEM on our request that Lake Martin be designated OAW.
- “Unsung Heroes”. A number of people were remembered by humorous anecdotes about their contributions to Lake Watch though the years...and one who was noted for being navigationally challenged.
  - Ross Payton (deceased), the former Mayor of Sylacauga who was described as an “attack dog” by local officials during the early days of the Sugar Creek pollution issue.
  - Dan Ryan (deceased), a former FBI agent who fell into the lake from his boat during a water-testing routine but still valiantly saved his test kit.
  - Charlie Zeisler (deceased) who actually climbed down a sewer manhole opening to check out the Dadeville wastewater treatment plant.
  - Larry Klass who showed just how tough it is to be a water monitor when he dislocated his hip during a testing routine.
  - Ricky & Terri Brand who were asked not to return for more bacterial testing after scaring the wits out of swimmers at the Wind Creek State Park beach.
  - Bill & Linda Stewart who went the extra mile...literally...and consorted with snakes, briars, kudzu and marijuana growers while doing water testing in very remote places.

- Stan Pietrzykowski (deceased) who was highly amused at a document he found in ADEM files that recommended an employee drive a motorboat around the Wind Creek State Park sewage lagoon to help with aeration.
  - Mary Ann Bronson who was amazed at the tenacity of a former Mayor of Alexander City when he attempted to remove many tons of sewage sludge from the lake using work-release men armed only with a few rakes, shovels and a wheelbarrow.
  - And finally, your newsletter author who got lost in the woods on a return trek from checking sewage problems near Dadeville and had to be found by a local rescue squad...and in the process suffered a case of dehydration and severe loss of pride. Thanks to Dave Heinzen who alerted the rescuers and even more thanks for cell phones.
- The program was given by Dr. Bill Deutsch, Alabama Water Watch Program Director who gave a most inspirational talk about the empowerment of citizens who choose to do something about protecting public waters. He made an interesting point about a connection to the hydrologic cycle wherein school kids are taught how rainfall is recycled again and again. He coined the term "hydro-illogical cycle" that describes how people quickly forget the seriousness of polluted water and lack of water during droughts when things begin to improve. And he also encouraged Lake Watch monitors to "keep on keepin' on" with water quality testing.

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3. Reflections. During this time of year it's nice to recall past associations with people in the Lake Watch family. Former board members come to mind: Jack Bush (dec.), Ricky Brand, Diana French, John Bishop, Larry Locke, Faye Gould, Judy Palfrey, George Chandler (dec.), Bill Stewart, Mack Teate (dec.), Betty Daniels, Dan Ryan (dec.), Mark Kearse, Forrest Brazzell (dec.), and of course current board members.

But none stands out more than **John Glasier** who has been Lake Watch Vice President for the past 10 years. John is a retired Army Colonel who comes from the "left coast" called California. He has more knowledge about water quality than anyone I know. In fact, he has a Masters Degree in environmental science and taught the subject at West Point. John is our "go to" guy when things get technical. He has the innate ability to cut to the chase and get to the point of the matter. And he's tried for years to keep me on the straight and narrow...a most difficult task. But make no mistake...John is the technical force behind the success of Lake Watch and deserves much credit for the things we've accomplished. The best news is that he will remain as Technical Advisor to the board. Kudos to John for all his hard work on behalf of Lake Watch.

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4. Environmental education. Lake Watch continues to provide *Living Streams* programs to young people in the Lake Martin area...the count now exceeds 3500 since the mid-1990s. Several old-timers were at Camp ASCCA this year to help...Tom Collier, Tommy Futral, Dick Duncan, and the Bronsons. They were joined by newcomers Tom & Pat Lynch, Carey Mullican, Denise Walls, Hagan Wagoner, and Master Gardeners Jerry Ogletree, Mo Corley, and Kaye Thackerson. These highly qualified volunteers are making a difference in the understanding of environmental matters.

5. Water Wars. We haven't heard much lately about the 16-year interstate fight over water rights between Alabama, Georgia and Florida but rest assured the issues are still bubbling just under the surface. A recent update reveals what is described as a "*tangled web that includes seven federal lawsuits in three different court systems and a plethora of plaintiffs*." Good word...plethora. The issues raised in the suits are so complicated that it will be years before there is any resolution, and even then no one will be satisfied. As someone said, future wars will be fought over the availability of water.

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6. Membership.

- o Our membership remains solidly in the 300 range...maybe up a few due to people joining on-line. As I've mentioned in past newsletters, that seems to be an optimal number, particularly since we've partnered with the Lake Martin HOBO group and thereby represent their 2000+ members in environmental matters. We remain the primary advocate for clean water in the Lake Martin area and are the main source of environmental education programs concerning water quality.
- o Enclosed are renewal slips for those whose dues are due. Please take time to send a check to: **Alexander City, Lake Watch, P.O. Box 72, AL 35010**. And remember that the IRS has designated Lake Watch as 501(c)(3) so your contributions are tax-exempt.

**Merry Christmas and Happy New Year!**

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