

After 30 years of service, Lake Watch remains dedicated to the stewardship of our treasured Lake Martin. The major changes since the inception of Lake Watch are in the threats to the lake. In the early days of the organization, threats were primarily from municipal and industrial sources, and those have since been resolved. Current threats are primarily nonpoint sources – muddy water flushing off construction sites and fecal matter with its associated bacteria and nutrients flushing off the landscape after significant rains.

To avoid repeating Lake Watch's numerous achievements during earlier years (these were highlighted in the October 2016 *Lake* magazine article, *Lake Watch turns 25*), I will focus on recent activities and achievements. Of course, who could discuss Lake Watch without mentioning our founder, Dick Bronson, and his ever-faithful supporter and confidant, Mary Ann Bronson? They, along with a cadre of devoted volunteers, forged a solid



LAKE WATCH
BY ERIC REUTEBUCH

foundation of water quality data, public outreach and clean water advocacy that has enabled the group to continue to flourish.

A major shift in our focus within the past few years is a broadening of our water testing to include streams in the watershed above the lake, as well as sites in the uppermost reaches of the lake itself. To date, we have tested 16 stream samples and three river samples that had high levels of *E. coli* (above Alabama Department of Environmental Management limits), and recently two samples from the uppermost portion of the lake that also had high *E. coli*. We are working with a coalition of local stakeholders to develop a warning system that will alert folks in any areas of the lake that test as unsafe for swimming. We reported in our last article (*Lake Watch goes hi-tech with AU microbiologist*, *Lake* magazine, July 2021) that we are working with an AU microbiologist to determine the origin of these bacteria. As always, we'll keep you posted.

We also keep a lookout for bad players in residen-

tial construction around the lake. I encourage you to do the same. One of the most common issues is collapsed silt fences, or worse, no silt fences between the construction site and the lake. This allows muddy water to flow directly into the lake during a significant rain event. Take digital pictures of bad players and file a digital complaint with ADEM (details are enumerated in the article, *Build Responsibly*, *Lake* magazine, July 2019. *Note: you can find all referenced articles at lakewatch.org/Lake-Magazine-Articles*).

If you have read our Lake Watch articles through the years and appreciate our work, I urge you to support us by becoming a member. Membership finances our water testing supplies and gives us a bigger voice for protecting the lake through clean water advocacy. You may even want to become a water monitor, a decision I guarantee you wouldn't regret.

Eric Reutebuch is president of Lake Watch Lake Martin. Learn more at lakewatch.org.

I test water quality because I know that water is life, and if we don't protect it, we are doomed. I love being outdoors beside water. I believe in loving our downstream neighbors.

~ Janne Debes, Pace's Point

I am concerned about the environment and the lack of attention environmental issues receive. We are rapidly poisoning our planet on so many levels. I am concerned about the future for our kids, grandkids and future great-grandkids. What we are doing with Alabama Water Watch is so important for the protection of our waterways. I am inspired by the information and support we receive from Lake Watch of Lake Martin, AWW and Alabama River Alliance and am happy to play a small role in that effort. My hope is that what we are doing here would continue to spread and inspire others to get involved.

~ Allen Sneed, Blue Creek

Why should I spend my time and effort to test the water quality of the lake?

When I sit on our porch and gaze across the rippling waves, I want to know what's beneath the surface. But what really nudged me to test was seeing my grandkids swimming, laughing, gulping and spitting out mouthfuls of lake water. I had to know they were safe.

~ Joanne Walker, Sandy Creek Embayment

Living full-time on Lake Martin, and one who likes to swim all the time, I have a vested interest to make sure we identify any problems or issues with our beautiful Lake Martin early. These issues can result from man-made activities: chicken farm overflow; over fertilizing; and septic and sewage treatment plant problems. Problems can also stem from nature, like geese and the life cycle of the lake itself. It is important that we monitor Lake Martin on a continuous basis. I also like to meet people who care about Lake Martin.

~ Edwin Eiswerth, Sturdivant Embayment

Lucky for us ... we have a lake house on Lake Martin! Many family members and friends come to visit and vacation on the lake. Swimming and boating on Lake Martin is more than a favorite recreation. It is our lifestyle. It is said that Lake Martin is the economic engine of our community. Fundamental to this, our lake water quality must be beyond clean and safe for swimming. It must be outstanding, as befits our Treasured Lake. I believe our lake water quality is indeed threatened by the expanding poultry industry and by shortcomings in community wastewater treatment. I believe that I, and all of us, should be informed and active as citizen clean-water advocates. Alabamians ... don't take clean water for granted! It must be celebrated and protected as something we love.

~ Matt Campbell, Sandy Creek Embayment