

# LAKE WATCHER

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*The Newsletter of Lake Watch of Lake Martin*  
*by Eric Reutebuch*

*No. 57, Fall 2021*

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## Lake Watch Officers:

Eric Reutebuch...President  
Matt Campbell...Vice-president  
Dianna Porter.....Secretary  
Janne Debes.....Treasurer

## LW Board of Directors:

Myrna Lehman	Laurie Barrett
Tom Collier	Jesse Cunningham
Dick Bronson	Joanne Walker

## LAKE WATCH TURNS 30!!

## NO LAKE WATCH ANNUAL MEETING THIS YEAR ☹️

This Fall Newsletter is to update Lake Watch members on a flurry of recent activities. I refer you to our last newsletter for details of our 2020 activities and accomplishments (see [www.lakewatch.org/resources/Documents/Newsletter56-FINAL.pdf](http://www.lakewatch.org/resources/Documents/Newsletter56-FINAL.pdf)).

Oh, and by-the-way, **Lake Watch turns 30** this year! You can read about our first 25 years in the Lake Magazine article at [www.lakewatch.org/Lake-Magazine-Articles](http://www.lakewatch.org/Lake-Magazine-Articles) - click on *Lake Watch turns 25*. **THANKS to Dick and Mary Ann Bronson** for all of their efforts over the years in laying a solid foundation for Lake Watch! The sacrifices were many and the appreciation was slim. Thanks to their efforts, we now have the one and only Treasured Alabama Lake in the state!

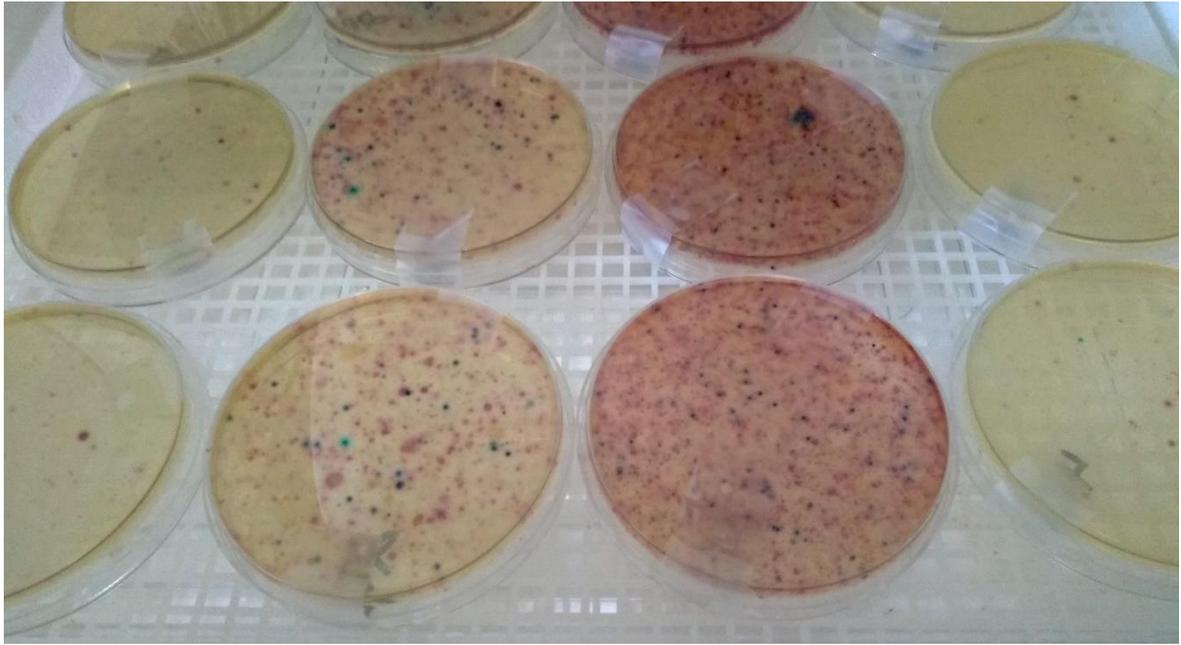
The Lake Watch Board delayed this year's annual meeting in hopes of holding it in the Fall. Due to the recent surge in covid cases and hospitalizations, it was decided that we wait until next year. Though the covid pandemic has necessitated changes in our lives, Lake Watch has been very active over the past several months in water monitoring and in clean water advocacy efforts. Efforts included:

- ❖ Creation of a new Lake Watch brochure, and brochure distribution to lake marinas – **THANKS Myrna & Chuck Lehman** (get some brochures to **promote Lake Watch** - give one to a neighbor and to a friend).
- ❖ Monitoring lakeside construction sites (which are booming!) for erosion control, and reporting bad actors to ADEM (for info on what to look for and how to report bad actors, see Lake Magazine article: [www.lakewatch.org/Lake-Magazine-Articles](http://www.lakewatch.org/Lake-Magazine-Articles) - click *Build Responsibly*). **Do your part – report bad actors.**



A Bad Actor who had zero erosion control, no silt fences to intercept muddy water between the construction site and the lake was reported by Lake Watch and resolved thanks to the prompt action of ADEM (site remains anonymous to protect the guilty).

- ❖ Establishing 3 new upper lake sites for monitoring inflow of possible bacteria contamination.
- ❖ Continued monitoring at 32 sites throughout the lake and its watershed (see map on next page).
- ❖ Collaborating with Lake Martin HOBO – **THANK YOU HOBO**, for your support of an AU research project focused on bacterial contamination in the upper lake and its watershed (called Microbial Source Tracking – see Lake Magazine article for more information: [www.lakewatch.org/Lake-Magazine-Articles](http://www.lakewatch.org/Lake-Magazine-Articles) - click *Lake Watch goes hi-tech with AU microbiologist*).
- ❖ Reporting high *E. coli* levels (from fecal contamination) from streams above the lake.
- ❖ Measuring high *E. coli* in the upper lake above HWY 280 bridge for the **FIRST TIME**.
- ❖ Assisting AU in kicking off a watershed bacterial study by conducting side-by-side bacterial testing and collecting field samples for analysis – **THANK YOU Matt and Ann Campbell** for leading this sampling effort, and to **Dr. Feng** and her grad student, **Wenjing**, for working with us on protecting the lake!
- ❖ Receiving the first set of genetic results from AU for an upper lake water sample that indicated bacteria was from **CATTLE, HUMANS, and CHICKENS**.
- ❖ Submitting information and Lake Watch data to ADEM last month as input for their compilation of the 2022 303(d) List of Impaired Streams. Due to repeatedly monitoring high *E. coli* in streams above the lake, we recommended that these streams be added to the list, and that ADEM focus attention on verifying the bacterial contamination issues in these streams and work on resolving them.



Bacteria test plates, done in triplicate (thanks Matt & Ann), from the Tallapoosa River, Emuckfaw Creek, Timbergut Creek and Hillabee Creek (left to right) in incubator, 8/18/21. On this date, the river and Hillabee were clean, while Emuckfaw and Timbergut had high levels of bacterial contamination (dark dots are *E. coli*).

### **A Note on Lake Watch Watershed Monitoring Above the Lake**

When we initiated the watershed monitoring above the lake, we had 3 questions that we wanted answered:

1. Do we have a bacterial pollution problem above the lake? Are streams above the lake transporting fecal contamination into the Tallapoosa River (which flows into the upper lake)?
2. Is the fecal contamination reaching the lake?
3. Where is the fecal contamination coming from?

As indicated in the previous bullet points, our watershed and lake bacterial sampling efforts have answered the first two questions: 1. YES; 2. YES, under certain conditions (high rainfall/runoff events). With the help of Dr. Feng and her graduate student, Wenjing, we are working on getting the answer to question #3.

As noted above, for the **FIRST TIME** in our lake monitoring, we measured high *E. coli* in the upper lake above HWY 280 bridge. The readings were above 600 *E. coli* per 100 milliliters of water (about a cup of water). This is about double the number of *E. coli* level that ADEM considers safe for swimming. This was confirmed by side-by-side testing by the AU lab. We are alarmed by this development and believe that action needs to be taken. We are working on action strategies as we continue to monitor the water, particularly on a system to alert lake residents and lake users when an area of the lake is contaminated with *E. coli* and unsafe for swimming.

So, how do we resolve the contamination problem? After getting a handle on where the fecal contamination problem is coming from, or at least what critter(s) it's coming from at different areas of the watershed above the lake, we need to press ADEM to step up to protect our lake – identify the offenders and get them to develop an action plan to stop pollution from entering the lake.

## A Note on the Lake Watch Budget

As reported in our last newsletter, Janne Debes, our Treasurer, reported a balance of \$5768.00 after expenditures. In 2020, there was an increase in membership and a decrease in expenses.

We anticipate **more expenses** for genetic testing (called microbial source tracking) at Auburn University as we try to identify the source(s) of bacterial contamination. We would like to do ID work above and beyond the AU research project if we can afford it. Please keep this in mind when you consider your membership and/or donation to Lake Watch.

## A Note on Water Monitoring

The Lake Watch volunteer water monitors continue to watch over our lake through their diligent monthly water testing. Unfortunately, eight monitors resigned last year 😞.

**WE NEED MORE MONITORS!** We also need citizen water monitor trainers! Some of you have responded to the recent 'Call for Help' to become monitors. I urge more folks to consider this worthy calling to protect our Treasured Lake.

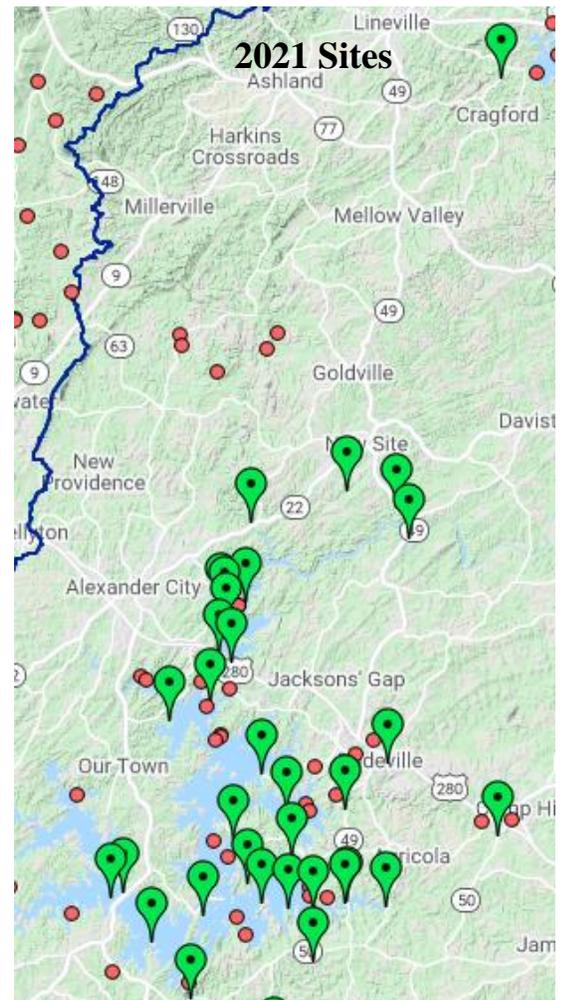
I'd like to extend a big **THANK YOU** to Janne Debes, our water monitoring coordinator (she is multi-talented!), for keeping all of us monitors supplied with testing chemicals and bacteria monitoring supplies!

And a big **THANK YOU** to all of our dedicated water monitors!

## Closing Thoughts

I believe we are at a turning point relative to the health of our lake and our watershed. We were blessed for many years having mainly forests above the lake, which have acted as a wonderful protector and filtration system for the watershed and the lake. That is rapidly changing as large new poultry houses are popping up above the lake. Concurrently, we are seeing unprecedented home construction around the lake – 2020 saw record numbers constructed. It seems that Lake Martin is being threatened on all fronts!

Lake Watch of Lake Martin is needed now more than ever. We urge each of you to spread the word about Lake Watch, to support our programs and to participate in them. Be sure to renew your membership if you haven't! Help sign up new members to our team! Consider an additional donation to Lake Watch! Not everyone can get out and monitor water or teach in a classroom, but each member is essential to our success. Together, we can and will make a difference in the protection of our lake, in water conservation and clean water advocacy, and in the world we leave for our children. Go visit your neighbor and sign him or her up. Or send your neighbor to our website, [www.lakewatch.org](http://www.lakewatch.org) to sign up. If every Lake Watch member encourages one or two friends to join in our efforts, it will go a long way toward ensuring the continuation of the good work we've accomplished over the past 30 years.



Lake Watch testing sites – green sites are active, red are inactive.

## Dues Reminder

*Take the plunge*, if you haven't already!

- Protect Lake Martin by supporting Lake Watch!
- And ask a neighbor to do the same!



For the many faithful Lake Watch members who already sent in their dues, thank you! And for those who haven't yet, don't forget to send your check to:

**P. O. Box 72, Alexander City, AL 35010**

Membership levels are listed below:

<b><u>Regular dues (annual):</u></b>	<b>Student \$10</b>	<b>Individual \$15</b>	<b>Family \$25</b>
<b><u>Lake Martin Steward:</u></b>	<b>Silver \$50</b>	<b>Gold \$100</b>	<b>Platinum \$250</b>

We also welcome donations – a donation in someone's honor/memory is a lovely tribute.

**Lake Watch**  
Lake Martin

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Alexander City, AL 35010

