



Lake James Environmental Association Newsletter

Spring 2012

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Protect and enhance the health and beauty of Lake James and its watershed

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Message from the President:

It sure feels like summer has arrived. We have been blessed with warm temperatures and ample rainfall supporting lush plant growth. The blooming acorns from last fall's largess are nearly a cover crop. The squirrels still seem to like them for lunch, so you may not have to pull all the sprouts. This edition of our newsletter provides updates on water sampling, lake levels, the spillway project, drought status, critters around the lake area, the lake-wide cleanup and fracking.

I hope you enjoy the newsletter and find it informative. Please let us know.

With best regards,

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Spring VWIN Update

By Bob Long

The early high temperatures this spring caused a major concern throughout the lake. Unlike normal spring conditions the lake was both very turbid and somewhat smelly. LJEAs members around the lake were concerned that the problem was due to high concentration of nutrients causing an algae bloom.

In order to test for a problem, we sampled the rivers normally and added a lake sample at the Big Island site (used during the summer months). The analytical results found that the nutrients were only about 3 times the normal levels which could not cause an algae bloom. Instead the early high temperatures had (as our sinuses told us) caused an explosion of pine tree pollen. For several weeks the lake was yellow and turbid due to this pollen sediment suspended in the water. Eventually it settled out or flowed into the lakes downstream and our pristine water is back to normal. However, although this wasn't a serious problem, it does point out the need for continuing sampling so that we know both what the normal levels are and if they jump to an unhealthy level due to some event upstream. As for the fishy smell we still haven't developed a theory for that but thankfully it has disappeared.

Fracking in NC, Threat to Lake?

By George Johnson

As you may know, the controversial practice of "fracking" (hydraulic fracturing of shale rock using high pressure injection of water, chemicals and sand to release natural gas) is being studied/[considered](#) in NC. Fracking has been associated with serious water quality and quantity problems in other states. Is it a threat to the Lake James watershed?

At first look, this seems like a non-issue for Lake James because the main gas deposits likely to be explored are in central NC. However, fracking utilizes a lot of freshwater, up to [5 million gallons](#) per each single well. This water has to come from somewhere, and the area under consideration may not be able to provide enough.

An impact [map](#) from the Southern Environmental Law Center (SELC), shows where hydrofracking is likely to occur and illustrates its proximity to public, surface and ground drinking water sources for 2.4 million people. The western portion of the region encompasses the Yadkin

River and ground water aquifers in Davie, Yadkin and Stokes Counties.

You may recall our 2005-2008 battle over the Concord-Kannapolis request for an interbasin transfer (IBT). C-K requested 36 million gallons/day from the Catawba River to the Yadkin basin, which ultimately could have impacted the water level of Lake James. One can imagine that the Yadkin could suddenly become thirsty again. So, let's just say this situation bears close watching.

SELC's critical comments to DENR concerning its recently-released Draft report about the safety of fracking in NC can be seen at the [SELC website](#). Extensive information about Shale Gas is at the [NCDENR website](#), including geologic assessment, current regulations, DENR studies (Draft and Final), Public Input, and Shale Gas News Releases. A comprehensive background article was published by the [NY Times](#) in February 2011.

No Wake Zones

By George Johnson



To help keep boating a safe and pleasurable experience please observe the No Wake Zones. There aren't many on Lake James, but they exist to warn about water safety hazards and thus protect all lake users, including swimmers, from being injured. They also provide the added benefit of reducing shoreline erosion, which helps keep the lake clear. The zones are there because near misses have occurred repeatedly in the past.

A No Wake Zone requires that vessels travel at idling speed, a speed that creates no appreciable wake. Each zone is marked by buoys like the one illustrated here. Most No Wake Zones are located in fairly narrow or otherwise confined areas like Canal Bridge, near marinas where boats refuel, or in coves where boat traffic can be congested and/or swimmers and kayakers (especially children) can be difficult to see.

The dangers arise from excess boat speed, inattentive skippers or obstructed visibility, e.g., an island or the elevated bow of a boat when "plowing" (operating just below planing speed). So please respect these carefully selected and marked protection zones. We'll all be safer for it and the fine plus court costs (\$215) you save can be spent on fun things, instead. To paraphrase an old singing cowboy, "Happy boat trails to you..."

Recent Clean-up Builds on Long Tradition

By George Johnson

Long-standing LJE board member, Dr. Bill Bell, Jr., describes how, years ago, his father had a vision of preserving a beautiful mountain lake. He began organizing Lake James clean-ups in McDowell County in the early 1970's, first with the Boy Scouts and then with Lake James Environmental Association (which still helps sponsor this event through member volunteers in both counties). Since the late 1980's Clean County and its successor, Keep McDowell Beautiful, have organized the annual cleanups in McDowell.

This year, Keep McDowell Beautiful was excited to officially partner for the first time with Burke County and with the Lake James State Park in organizing the whole lake clean-up. On beautiful Saturday, May 19th, over 200 volunteers in McDowell County and 155 in Burke County took on the task of cleaning up Lake James' shoreline and its islands. A list of the more than 40 sponsors of services, equipment, food and other supplies was provided to us.* During this outstanding volunteer event, people came together to share a passion for environmental awareness, beautification, and water quality improvement. Witnessing this achievement, Dr. Bell commented that this year's cross-county, cooperative clean-up would have made Dr. Bill Bell, Sr., very proud.

Thank you to all who participated. Please join the fun next year.

*Local & Regional Sponsors included: Abeles, Asbury Septic Tank Cleaning & Backhoe Service, Burke County Sheriff's Department, Catawba Riverkeeper Foundation's Lake James Covekeepers, Catawba Shorelines, City of Marion, Coburn Photography, Community of Lake James, Countryside Barbeque, Duke Energy Foundation, GDS, Inc., Green Valley Farms, Jersey Mike's Subs, Keep McDowell Beautiful, Lake James Environmental Association, Lake James Family Campground, Lake James Pub & Grill, Lake James State Park, Linville River's End Campground, Lowes Home Improvement - Morganton, Marion Moose Family Center, McDowell County, McDowell County Board of Education, McDowell News, MDC Signature Apparel, NC Wildlife Federation – Lake James Area Wildlife and Nature Society, NC Department of Corrections, NC Department of Transportation, NC Wildlife Resources Commission, Rayco Safety, Inc., Responder Boats, Volunteer Center of McDowell County.

*National sponsors for the 2012 Great America Clean-up included: Dow, Glad, LG, Nestle's Pure Life, Pepsi, Solo, Troy-Bilt, WM Waste Management, and Wrigley.



Gary Timbers



The Load



The Unload

Did you know?

by George Johnson

- If you feed the geese or give them other encouragement, like a lush lawn, you will be amazed at how much a pound of poop, per goose, per day amounts to where you do not want it!
- Deer love to be fed corn and acorns. If you feed them, you will find that they also love to feed on your (and your neighbor's) ornamental shrubs.
- There is a difference between moles and voles. Moles eat the grubs that eat the roots of your grass. Voles eat the roots of your prized plants.
- Many snakes dine on moles and voles. So, be kind to them (the snakes, that is).
- The occasional copperhead and rattler are the only poisonous snakes native to this area. The good news is they find the voles and moles tasty, too.
- White perch is an invasive species in Lake James.

White perch were first documented on Lake James in 2008. Once fish are established, it is very hard to get rid of them.



White perch have had a negative influence on fish populations (crappie and white bass) in other NC reservoirs. The Wildlife Commission is aware of their presence in Lake James, will continue to monitor the crappie and white bass populations here and will alter management strategies, if needed. One local angler advises, "When you catch them [white perch], keep them. Keep them all!! Use them for fertilizer or feed to the eagles but don't put them back. I understand that they are good to eat."

The **big issue** is the invasive nature of introduced fish. Anglers constantly move animals around. Unfortunately, this causes instability and domination within a system. For example, some fishermen like spotted bass because they are extremely aggressive and easy to catch. If spotted bass are introduced into Lake James, they may do serious harm to the smallmouth and largemouth bass fisheries, as happened in Lake Norman.

Thanks to David Goodfred, District 8- Fishery Biologist I, North Carolina Wildlife Resources Commission

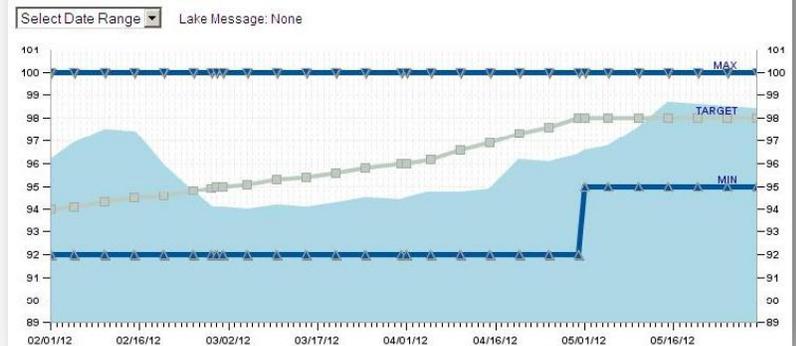
Lake Levels, Spillway and Drought Stage Update

by George Johnson

Lake James' level generally has climbed since March when it bottomed out at 93.9'. In May it overshot the summer target level and is now working its way back down to 98.0'. Construction equipment has disappeared from the Paddy Creek spillway, leaving behind a taller wing wall and improved apron surface to handle future floods. The basin is no longer in any LIP drought stage.

Lake James

3-Month Lake Level History



LJEA Website Update

by Eric Loomis

The LJEA is now capable of accepting membership information and donations electronically through our website!
Go to www.ljea.org/membership.html

