



Lake James Environmental Association

Newsletter

Summer 2012

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

Board Members

George Johnson (P)

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Jimmy Blanton	Keith Smith
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Bill Chapman	Steven Lian
Judy Francis	Eric Loomis
Buddy Barrett	Russell Hennessy
Melanie Shaver	Denice Rehtiene



Message from the President:

Summer has cooled down a bit and it is our good fortune finally to be officially out of drought. This edition of the newsletter introduces you to community service volunteer Alexander Robau and contains announcements about RiverFest and an LJEA Picnic. There is a note about a developing fish sampling project, news about a coal ash pond lawsuit settlement, as well as updates on the silt mapping project, our Kids in the Creek program, and information about county noise ordinances and recent dock disasters.

A sincere thank you to all those who responded to our May membership drive. Your support makes possible the things we do together to protect and enhance the health and beauty of Lake James and its watershed. Enjoy the fruits of your labors!

With best regards,

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Mark Your Calendar!

by George Johnson

RiverFest is Saturday, September 15th from 10 AM – 3 PM, Lake James State Park- Paddys Creek Area (new park). Admission is free. LJEA and many other environmental and sport exhibitors will have booths. Come by and see us!

Activities will include: Water Derby, Canoe and Kayak Races with Prizes, Eco Tours with Catawba Riverkeeper, Live Raptor Release, Bluegrass Music, Food, and Kayak Raffle.

Other **exhibitors** will include: Carolina Raptor Center, Catawba Valley Astronomy Club, Catawba Valley Outing Club, Catawba Valley Heritage Alliance, CBS Sports, Community of Lake James, Foothills Conservancy, Lake James Area Wildlife and Nature Society, McDowell Honeybees, McDowell Trails Association, Morganton Parks and Recreation, NC Division of Air Quality, NC State Parks, Catawba Riverkeepers, Overmountain Victory Trails Association, WPCOG (Environmental Planning)...and more!! Click [here](#) for more.

LJEA Picnic: Sunday afternoon, September 16th, Pavilion at Catawba River Area, Lake James State Park (old park). Speakers at 3 PM-learn more about what's going on in our watershed. Food at 4 PM. Bring a dish to pass. Hot dogs, rolls, condiments, plates, cups, plastic utensils, napkins provided. Please RSVP by September 10th to 828-659-2851 or bayshorebob@frontier.com so we have a count.

Lake James Fish Sampling

by George Johnson

The board has agreed to help fund a Catawba Riverkeeper fish sampling project. The objective is to determine if PCB's, mercury or other heavy metals are problematic in top predator and bottom feeding fish such as large mouth bass and catfish. This precautionary testing is planned because positive results have been found in downstream reservoirs and it is not clear whether fish upstream also are impacted. Potential industrial sources previously existed in our watershed and these types of contaminants can be persistent.

Catawba Riverkeeper Obtains Coal Ash Settlement in Basin

by George Johnson

Coal ash ponds along the Catawba-Wataree River store toxic wastes that are threats to drinking water in our basin. There has been pressure to improve security of the ash. Recently, South Carolina Electric & Gas (SCE&G) and the Catawba Riverkeeper Foundation reached a settlement of a suit brought by the Southern Environmental Law Center on behalf of the Riverkeeper regarding coal ash storage at Wateree Station in Eastover, S.C. All this coal ash will be moved to lined landfill storage away from the river or recycled. Also the timetable for the complete removal of coal ash is accelerated. Hopefully, this settlement will also induce Duke Energy to clean up their coal ash ponds. Click [here](#) for more information about coal ash.

Community Service Volunteer

by George Johnson

High school senior Alexander Robau, from Naples, FL and summer resident at Lake James, volunteered to help us with some of our activities. He is interested in science, mathematics and music and has completed Advance Placement courses in Chemistry, Environmental Science, Calculus, Computer Science and English and is an Eagle Scout candidate. Of course, we accepted! He assisted with our bottom mapping project (see related story), with monthly water sampling and he critiqued our website from the perspective of a computer-literate young man. We were pleased to work with this very talented student.



Erosion & Sediment Reduction (E&SR) Program Update

by George Johnson

As you know we are pilot testing our equipment and methods for mapping silt deposits at the mouths of the rivers flowing into Lake James. To do this properly, it is necessary to validate our methods and calibrate the equipment for lake elevation, site locations, depth and bottom hardness readings. Previous pilot runs validated our ability to determine depth readings. Progress has been made on two additional fronts: hardness calibration and GPS benchmarks.

Hardness calibration: When the sonar equipment measures depths, it also captures information concerning bottom hardness. For these readings to be meaningful, they need to be calibrated against a known material hardness. Concrete launch ramps were selected as the reference material for hardness and some mapping runs were made using that baseline. Volunteer Alexander Robau helped with this calibration session, where we also tested our written procedures.

GPS Benchmarks: In the photo, Rick Edmondson of R.L.



Greene Surveying in Marion, is operating his \$35,000 GPS gear to set one of two GPS benchmark points for the bottom mapping team to use as references. These known control points will be utilized as checks at the start and finish of each mapping run. If lake elevation and GSP coordinate readings at the benchmarks disagree significantly with those from Duke Energy's posted lake elevation or our equipment readings of

location, the team will know that data from the latest mapping run are suspect.

Docks: Stuff Happens

by George Johnson



It is thought that an unextinguished grill fire on a dock, somehow spread to the dock and boat by next morning. A neighbor, making morning coffee, discovered the blaze just after 6 AM and called it in. S'mores, anyone?

(Photo by Bruce Messing)



We occasionally hear severe thunderstorm warnings and sometimes they mention high winds. A microburst (small, focused downburst from a severe thunderstorm) probably caused this dock damage at Mountain Harbour Marina. It is amazing how powerful the wind must have been and how limited was the area of damage.

(Photo by Suzy Johnson)

Kids in the Creek

by Anne Lian; Photos by Steven Liam

On a sunny, summer day, June 5, 2012, over 100 West McDowell Junior High students participated in their Water Day. They took turns wading in the Catawba River exploring macro-invertebrates. Nets were handed out and the more adventurous of them plunged in to overturn rocks and probe rapids for water critters. Others expressed surprise and awe at the containers of mayflies, damselflies, aquatic sowbugs, and others captured earlier. Group after group rotated through the LJEA station on the Joseph McDowell Historical Catawba Greenway in Marion. Adults helping included George Johnson, Mike Jackson, Charles Sander, Steven, Anne, and Craig Lian.

The purpose of this program was:

1. to lead students to a greater understanding and appreciation for the animals that live in the Catawba River
2. for an inquiry-based exploration of the watershed environment
3. for all to learn that bugs in the water mean that the water is healthy
4. to realize how important water is to the environment

Students beamed when sharing what they found and many appeared to be enthusiastic about this hands-on learning experience. It was a day well spent.

"The art of teaching is the art of assisting discovery."

- Mark Van Doren



"A mind that is stretched by a new experience can never go back to its old dimensions."

- Oliv Wendell Holmes

County Noise Regulations

by George Johnson

One of our members has brought to our attention the counties' noise regulations. McDowell makes it clear that ANY noise at ANY TIME that "tends to annoy, disturb or frighten" (such as fireworks waking small children from their sleep at night or boaters blasting music) is a violation of the law. Burke County has similar language, with some time-of-day guidelines that are not in McDowell's code. He reminds us that noise travels very efficiently across water so consideration is appreciated. However, if good judgment and common courtesy are not used, a visit from the Sheriff's Department may occur.

Copies of the noise ordinances can be found at:

Chapter 26, Article II at [Burke County](#)

Section 2. Noise Regulation at [McDowell County](#)



Early Morning Photo from Old Wildlife by Tom Ricks