



Lake James Environmental Association

Newsletter

Winter 2014-15

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

Board Members

George Johnson (P)	Tracy Childers (VP)
Otis Wilson (S)	Richard Spitz (T)
Ted Restel	Jack Raker
Jimmy Blanton	Bob Long
Bo McMinn	Sean Good
Allan Pinkul	Wendell Sugg
Judy Francis	Buddy Barrett
Keith Smith	Jim Darsie
Lauren Norell	Kaitlyn McMinn
John Zimmerman	Jason Garretson
Christina Bruinsma	Alex Dergins
Nora Coffey (ex officio)	

Message from the President:



This winter and early spring have brought lots of activity. At the first meeting in 2015, the board elected officers for the year (see bottom left, this page).

We've been wrestling with the proposed shooting range issue, a lake cleanup, launching the training portion of our planned Silt Loading Study at Lake James, and starting some technology initiatives that will improve our ability to communicate with our members and among the board. All very exciting, except getting cold and wet on cleanup day. Nevertheless, the turnout and "catch" were quite good. You all are a supportive and hearty bunch. Thank you!

George Johnson

LJEA

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Technology Initiatives (IT)

By George Johnson

For 2015 LJEA recruited a younger, more IT and social media savvy set of new board members (than folks in my age group) and were fortunate to get such an impressive set. My first request to them was to use their "fresh eyes" to critique our website, which they did. We also formed a technology team of Al Pinkul, new member John Zimmerman and me. John is co-founder of Casting for Hope (www.castingforhope.org), co-owner of the business Upper Creek Angler (www.uppercreekangler.com) and a teacher at Patton High School – all of which involve extensive use of IT. He gave Al and me a very helpful tech briefing and inspired us to get moving.

After receiving observations from other new board members, John made recommendations to the Board in March. It was unanimously agreed that we should rebuild the Website using WordPress as the platform. The website change is step one to improving communication with our members and the public. Additionally, we aim to enhance our collaboration capability as a board by using Google Drive, and to begin producing the newsletter using MailChimp. We expect this transition to take several months for learning and effective execution. We'll keep you apprised of our progress.

Spring, Fertilizer and the Lake



Our resident chemist/farmer, Bob Long, says fertilizer is a good thing, used properly. It helps keep plants healthy and growing fruitfully. However, plants

can only use so much of it depending on soil conditions and location. A good approach is to have your soil tested through your county Agricultural Extension Service. Then work with them to understand the nature of your soil, what improvements it may need and how much of which nutrients your particular plants require. Follow their instructions and keep the nutrients from running into nearby storm sewers, streams, rivers or the lake. One particularly interesting point is that plants

cannot access the nutrient phosphate unless it is in the soil. So if you use dry fertilizer, work it in where the roots can reach it. Otherwise it is a waste because it binds to the top soil and, if washed away, can become one of the more troublesome water pollutants, promoting algae blooms. Some gardeners/farmers inject fertilizer into the soil in liquid form to avoid this waste.

Lake Cleanup

(Photos courtesy of Keith Smith and Gary Timbers)

Cleanup day, March 14, dawned gray, drizzly and 43 degrees F. The drizzle stopped long enough to get boats and volunteers underway. Then it started again, from mist, to drizzle, to steady rain and back again. By about 11:30 AM the watering stopped and folks were able to shed some of their rain gear.



Despite the wet start, there was a good turnout, including many high school students. Boatload after boatload of trash arrived at the offload sites. Generally, it was the usual stuff – white Styrofoam, other foam pieces in blue or orange, tires, odd articles



of discarded clothing (a hat here, a glove there, a sweatshirt, a flip-flop), some empty blue, plastic, 50-gallon food containers

(e.g., apple juice concentrate), pieces of dock, concrete

reinforcing wire, myriad glass and plastic bottles and containers, fishing bobbers, chewing tobacco cans, a torn old plastic wading pool, a boat trailer bunk. Most unusual was a bowling ball...or was it a cannon ball with a couple of holes in it?

Thanks to all who helped out.

The Whole Lake Haul

- 196 volunteers
- 4.55 tons of waste = (9100 pounds)
- 51 car tires + 1 large truck tire = (52 total)

Prescribed Fires

A prescribed burn occurred on January 31st, in the vicinity of Dobson's Knob south-facing base. The wind created quite a set of smoke plumes which persisted until late



afternoon. The accompanying photo looks across Old Wildlife from the Marion Lake Club area.

Announced 2,200 Acre Prescribed Burn Planned for McDowell County

NEBO, N.C., March 23, 2015 - The U.S. Forest Service plans to conduct a 2,200-acre prescribed burn on the Grandfather Ranger District, Pisgah National Forest, between now and April 15th, depending on favorable weather. The agency will conduct the two-day, burn north of Lake Tahoma on the East side of Highway 80 in McDowell County on federal, state, and private land. If and when the actual planned burn occurs is uncertain. It has already been delayed due to high winds but there was an unexpected wildfire in the Ridgecrest area, west of Old Fort, starting Tuesday afternoon, March 31st.

<http://www.wlos.com/news/features/top-stories/stories/black-mountain-brush-fire-threatening-structures-20339.shtml#.VRs4-fnF98H>

Should you smell smoke from these burns or experience unpleasant effects, please inform Elizabeth O'Nan, Phone: 828 724 4221; Email:

pace@mcdowell.main.nc.us who documents these occurrences.

Board Member Interview: Keith Smith

By Christina Bruinsma

Q. Tell us about yourself in a few brief words.

A. I am an outdoors oriented person who loves mountain biking and rock climbing.

Q. What is your background/profession?

A. I have a bachelor's degree in environmental education and a master's degree in geography. I currently am a high school teacher.

Q. How long have you been a member of LJEA?

A. I have been a member for three years.

Q. To which other environmental groups/organizations do you belong?

A. I belong to the Sierra Club and to Greenpeace

Q. What factors led to your decision to make your home in the NC foothills?

A. I used to come down from college and go rock climbing in the Lineville Gorge, so I thought this would be a great place to live.

Q. Describe a formative experience in your past that shapes your environmental consciousness today and influenced your decision to join the LJEA.

A. My most formative experience was a cross country trip in college. On this trip, I visited dozens of national parks and was awed by their natural beauty and felt compelled to preserve these wild places.

Q. If you were in charge of solving America's "energy crisis", how would you do it?



- A. I would increase taxes on the use of fossil fuels like gasoline and use this money to research renewable energy solutions.
- Q. How does the Lake James watershed area (Burke/McDowell) continue to grow in an environmentally-conscious manner?
- A. One very important thing that shows growth in an environmentally conscious way was the dedication of the new state park. Another is the land use restrictions that we have around the lake.
- Q. What are the goals of the LJEA as you see them?
- A. I believe the LJEA's goals are to protect Lake James and its surrounding watershed along with providing educational opportunities for the surrounding community.

Silt Loading Study



As you may recall, LJEA has been pursuing the study of silt in Lake James, mapping its location in the river deltas and in some coves, as well as discovering how it moves in storms. We are now kicking off Stage 1 of a study to document how much silt comes from which of the lake's various tributaries.

The initial preparation will entail 4 hours of Muddy Waters Watch training for our volunteers, which will prepare them to observe and report silt-laden water. They will use this knowledge to consider whether Stage 2 of the study is feasible and how it should be approached. Stage 2 would involve creating a detailed sampling plan and undergoing training that enables the volunteers to safely and effectively gather stormwater samples, three times a year for two years, from specific erosion sites along the tributaries. Data and information from these samples will support educational efforts to inform land owners and other interested parties about land losses they are

experiencing and to help them find ways to improve the situation. Since the land losses often end up in Lake James, improving their circumstances will also improve Lake James.

If you are interested in participating in this training and study please contact George Johnson at gandsjohnson@frontier.com or 828-655-1872.

Shooting Range Update

By George Johnson

Our Fall Newsletter briefly described the NC Wildlife Resources Commission (NCWRC) proposal for a shooting range on Wolf Pit Road near its intersection with NC 126 and close to Linville boat access. The suggested site is in the Pisgah Game Land Dedicated Nature Preserve. Subsequently, a second round of



sound tests was conducted. Both sets of test results and an Environmental Assessment were released to the public. (See at <http://www.ncwildlife.org/Hunting/BeforetheHunt/ShootingRanges/ProposedShootingRanges.aspx> under **Burke County**.)

After reviewing these studies, LJEA sent a second letter (2-27-15) to the NCWRC pointing out that the proposed range did not seem to be an approved use of the Nature Preserve, per terms and conditions of its dedication documents. It also documented unresolved concerns about potential pollution from lead, stormwater and noise, as well as public safety. On March 3rd, Wildlife held a second public information meeting in Burke County and also took comments. LJEA's public comments for the March 3rd public meeting and its second letter to the NCWRC are posted on our website, www.ljea.org, under the "Issue Updates" button on the left side of the Home Page.

The debate continues and is focused primarily on site suitability and on procedural requirements.

Suitability: There is widespread opinion that a shooting range at this location would be inconsistent with long term established and planned uses of the land in and around the Preserve. These uses involve hundreds of thousands of people per year which support Burke County's growing economy - ecotourism activity and plans, continuing development of Lake James State Park and of area trails.

Procedural Requirements: Since the site development project anticipates using federal funds, it is subject to regulatory requirements under the National Environmental Protection Act (NEPA) which are not being met.

There have been constructive meetings and conversations involving the interested parties and NCWRC and the hope is that a common sense resolution to this matter will be found soon.