



LBCA

November 2007

Newsletter

President's Comments

While writing the "President's Comments" for this newsletter, I could not help being distracted by the beauty of the day – the falling leaves and the fullness of Lake Burton. We are truly blessed to have a home in such a beautiful place.

While the lake is quiet, several of our members and officers are working on important issues such as erosion and siltation, zoning in the county, and fire ratings for our area. Your board of directors, officers, and past presidents are a very diligent and hardworking group. When you see them, please thank them for their efforts.

The LBCA dues notices have been

mailed. I would appreciate your prompt response to the information requested (especially e-mail addresses) and sending in your dues check. The publication of the LBCA 2008 Membership Directory is tied directly to receipt of your information.

Carol and I want to wish each of you a wonderful holiday season. If I can be of assistance in any way, please contact me via e-mail at: lbca@lbca.net . . . or directly at cchigdon@alltel.net.



Jim Higdon

Voter Registration Drive Continues

We are extremely encouraged by our current voter registration drive. Tammy Whitmire, head of voter registration for Rabun County, says she has seen a marked increase in voter applications from the lakes. Lake Rabun and Lake Seed are also getting many new voters. One question that is often asked concerns where to claim homestead exemption and where you are allowed to vote. As best as we can

determine, your homestead exemption should be claimed on your primary homestead. The requirement to vote in Rabun County only requires you to be "a resident" of Rabun County. Obviously, all lake owners have a residence in Rabun County – note your very large tax bill! If you need another voter registration form or have a question, please send an e-mail to jimholmes@alltel.net or call 706-947-3646.

"The Buzz"

We are very pleased with the response to our new column "Burton Buzz." Here is the opportunity for you to ask any question on any topic concerning lake life or issues in Rabun County. Many residents are concerned about the paving of roads – or the lack thereof. (Please see the accompanying article for an update on road paving.) Other

concerns have been: voter registration, light pollution, taxes, fire insurance, and billboard zoning. We have responded to each e-mail. Please let us know what is on your mind. This is one way for you to communicate with the LBCA board and have your voice heard. E-mail us at buzz@lbca.net or call 706-947-3646.



911

911 And EMS

What happens when you call 911 with a medical emergency? Rabun County's 2006-2007 budget for EMS is almost \$1.4 million. EMS is on duty 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Usually, there are four people on duty in Clayton, which is the dispatch center for Lake Burton.

When you call 911 with a medical emergency, the dispatcher will try to determine the extent of the problem. But even while asking essential questions (the "ABCs" – airway, breathing, and consciousness), the ambulance has already been dispatched and the First Responder notified. Once you dial 911, even if you break the connection or can not respond, the ambulance will be dispatched. The first person on the scene will probably be a First Responder. He will most likely arrive in his own vehicle and in work clothes. All First Responders are trained and state certified. The First Responder will be in direct contact with central dispatch, updating the patient's condition.

It is imperative to have your 911

numbers on both the road side and the lake side of your residence. Your 911 number in Rabun County is your street address. Any delay finding your house – either by road or water – can dramatically set back the chance for a 100% recovery of the patient. Everyone knows that time is vital in certain situations. (Please see the accompanying article on boathouse signs.)

Once the ambulance arrives and the extent of the emergency is determined, state laws allow you to choose to which hospital you want to be taken (if necessary). Most insurance policies will pay for you to be taken to the closest "capable" facility that can treat your individual emergency. If you elect to go to a more distant hospital, you may incur a personal expense. One adult can ride in the front of the ambulance with the approval of the driver.

By year end, there will be a new 911 system in place. The new system will allow for GPS with cell phones, a new mapping system, and the ability to alert EMS drivers to hidden dangers.

Boathouse Signs

At this time, 220 boathouse signs have been ordered and delivered. Chuck has done a great job filling the orders on a timely basis. Keep in mind that if you have a problem, he will stand behind his work . . . and . . . if you have a reason to make a name change, for a small charge he will do that as well. With the lake staying up this winter and with the dangerously high threat of fire, it is more important than ever to have a boathouse sign. Please remember we are making these signs available for your safety – the fire boat is used for all kinds of 911 emergencies. We were not sure when we started how many

signs would be ordered – and thus, how we would deliver them. As the number of orders increased, it became clear that mailing the signs or finding a pick up spot would not be an option. We sincerely express our thanks to Mountain Patrol for their delivery of our signs. Presently, sign orders have slowed and we are processing them in blocks of ten. There are still some September orders in the works. If you have ordered a sign and you have not received it – or you would like to order a sign – please call Marian Hansen at 706-947-3625 or, you may send an e-mail to her at: rthansen@alltel.net.



Water Quality

In June 2006, the Tallulah River Watershed Ecosystem Status Report was sent to every LBCA member. This booklet reported that one of the top causes for water deterioration is sedimentation. Wright Brothers Construction was fined and ordered to remove silt after negotiations with Georgia Power Company. The LBCA is continually monitoring the lake and looking for violations of the Clean Water Act. This monitoring is an ongoing process and one we take very seriously.

What can you do? Register to vote in Rabun County and press our county commissioners to pave all lake roads. Water runoff from dirt roads is a major contributor to silt going into the lake. Look at construction sites to see if silt fences are being used and then reset after heavy rain. Do not blow leaves or grass into the lake and if you have grass use a phosphate free fertilizer to cut down on algae growth. For more specific information please read the following article given to us by Jeff Jackson from the Georgia Power Company Land Management Office.



How To Minimize Impacts To Your Lake From Lawn Fertilizers

One of the best ways to reduce runoff from fertilized lawns is to plant a buffer of native plants between your lawn and lake. This buffer of native plants will do two things to prevent fertilizers from reaching the lake: (1) native plants will absorb runoff of lawn fertilizer and (2) soils in the buffer will also absorb fertilizer – as the phosphorus in the runoff will attach itself to soil particles. The added benefit of a buffer of native plants is that, once established, these plants require almost no maintenance. You can find native plants that are very attractive by going to the following link for the Georgia Native Plant Society: www.gnps.org.

Phosphorus is the primary nutrient promoting algal growth in our reservoirs. There are sources for phosphorus free fertilizers, as noted in a web site from the Maine Bureau of Land & Water Quality: www.maine.gov/dep/blwq/doclake/fert/supplier.htm. The USGS did a study of runoff from Maine lawns fertilized with and without phosphorus free fertilizer. Results of the study can be found at: <http://wi.water.usgs.gov/pubs/wrir-02-4130/wrir-02-4130.pdf>. It appears that the lawns fertilized with phosphorus free fertilizer exhibited runoff with less phosphorus than those fertilized with phosphorus containing fertilizer.

Ad Valorem Taxes On Boats

“The Buzz” was asked how the ad valorem taxes are calculated on boats. We visited with the tax assessor’s office to get the answer. The first of every calendar year the tax assessor sends an assessment notice to all boat owners. Boat owners are asked to place a value on their craft and return the form to the tax office. Rabun County will generally use this valuation to calculate the tax. If you do not return the

form with a value, the tax office will go on the Internet to try to find a comparable boat. By not returning the form, you put yourself at the risk of an unreasonable valuation – thus increasing your taxes. Remember, for 2008, complete the form with a realistic valuation and return it to the tax assessor’s office!





County Departments Moving

Due to the Brian Williams shooting in Atlanta, the state has passed an unfunded mandate regarding courthouse security. This will require many departments at the courthouse not involved with justice to move out. The old hospital top floor is being renovated at the cost of \$1.5 million. The health department will be moved to the reno-

vated space – and expanded. Next, the current health department building will be renovated and some courthouse personnel will be moved to that building. Finally, the first floor of the old hospital will be renovated. All the money for completing these changes will come from special purpose local option sales tax dollars. We all love unfunded mandates!

Burton Buzz



☑ The Rabun County volunteer firemen have completed a massive amount of work to update and standardize fire fighting capabilities. They are virtually finished with their work and are now awaiting inspectors from the ISO who will review what has been done and issue new ratings for the county. This should occur by the end of 2007 – but ISO only has one inspector to cover all of north Georgia – so we have to be patient. The good news is that our consultant, National Fire Service Org., who established our new standards and protocols, is confident the ratings in the county will be reduced significantly because of all the work that has been done.



☑ Your Board of Directors has voted to combine the August Annual Meeting with the Bluegrass Party. Please mark June 7, 2008 on your calendar. For those of you who have not attended the Bluegrass Party, it is a fun time of music, dinner, and comradeship. Plan to come and meet new friends and renew old friendships.

☑ Georgia Power Company has announced that the drawdown of Lake Burton has been cancelled for this winter. The current record low inflow of water to the lake would not be sufficient to refill it next spring . . . unless record rainfall occurs between now and then . . . and forecasters are indicating that the drought we are experiencing will continue. In related announcements, Georgia Power has also cancelled the drawdown of Lake Seed and Lake Rabun. The “white water” releases into the Tallulah River Gorge have also been halted.



☑ The LBCA has received more e-mails concerning roads than any other issue. The county has just begun the preliminary work on Dicks Creek Road. The county will pave approximately one mile from Moccasin Creek Road east and one half mile from Pass Lane north. The road will be brought up to the county standard of 18 feet wide – plus drainage and shoulders. The first bulldozing should begin this winter on the Pass Lane end. If you have any questions, please e-mail us at: buzz@lbca.net.

☑ The E coli level in Lake Burton hit record highs last month. The number one cause is geese. Please do not feed or otherwise encourage geese to inhabit the area.

☑ Please welcome John Barnett and Sam Dixon as new members of the LBCA Board of Directors . . . and the return of Bill Market who fills president, Jim Higdon's vacant seat.

☑ Keep in mind that we welcome comments on the LBCA Newsletter. Let us know what you think by e-mailing us at: buzz@lbca.net.