

### Extra, Extra, Extra

#### GREAT NEWS!

As your president I am so proud to report that the recent water testing by Compass Environmental has found that our water in Lake Burton is very pure. We can swim, drink and eat the fish from our Lake without fear of contamination. The Lake Burton Civic Association partnered with the Tallulah River Watershed Council to fund this test with the cooperation of Georgia Power Company. Your Board of Directors and Officers want our membership to be the first to know of the results. You will be able to access the full report on our web site as well as read the report of the environmental committee in this issue. This is just one of the many

ways in which your dues are used to support our wonderful lake.

Also included in this communication is a note from the West Rabun Property Owners Association. LBCA members will find enclosed with this newsletter a sample ballot that the WRPO is distributing. The Lake Burton Civic Association encourages you to become involved and vote in Rabun County, but, as a matter of policy, does not endorse any political candidate or party.

Yours truly,

Becky Callahan



### LBCA Donation Supports Water Quality



On October 14th, the Lake Burton Civic Association presented two donations from our association to the Tallulah River Watershed Council. \$4,300 was given to cover the cost of recent water tests. An additional \$5,000 gift will be applied to the committee's ongoing operating expenses. Pictured here, left to right, are Tom Fischer, chairperson of the TRWC; Bill Russell, chairperson of the LBCA Environmental Committee; and Becky Callahan, president of the LBCA.



## Water Quality & Environmental Report

Special Edition – October 23, 2012 – by Bill Russell

In our September newsletter I discussed at fair length two exciting projects that were unfolding in September, the water testing for organic synthetics (pesticides, herbicides, and fungicides) and the siltation and sedimentation monitoring program that Georgia Power Company (GPC) was initiating. It is my pleasure to inform you that the test results are in and GPC has completed the first mapping of the bottom contours, setting the waypoints for future mapping every September for years to come. I encourage you to refer back to the last newsletter.

Both of these events are a first for Lake Burton and a giant step toward understanding where we are and where we go from here with our water quality. It is the desire of the LBCA Board to provide its membership with answers to their questions and up to date information affecting everything from daily life on the lake to property values. Below are updates that we are excited to share with you in this special edition of the newsletter.

### **THE TEST RESULTS ARE IN!!**

#### **SOME BACKGROUND**

For many years GPC has conducted water testing for numerous things from turbidity to fecal coliform to phosphorus but not organic synthetics. Their logic was legitimate and sound as they saw no probable cause for these tests, but as concerns grew over the heavier use of these chemicals with the addition of a large golf course and community development along with the increasing number of heavily landscaped larger homes, many began to wonder and speculate about the possible presence and concentration of these chemicals in our water. At certain levels these chemicals could and would pose a health threat to those who swim, fish, and recreate in these waters.

The speculation and confusion became even greater several years ago with the publication of the "Nutter Report." This report was compiled by a

reputable and respected testing laboratory but was easily misinterpreted by the layman and for that matter even those fairly astute in aquatic biological sciences. Most misleading for the majority of us is the failure to realize that the tables mentioned in the report, showing the presence of a variety of chemicals, were discerned from silt core samples pulled from the bottom of coves that received runoff from the Waterfall Country Club (now the Lake Burton Club). The chemicals mentioned were molecularly bonded to the silt and in no way able to mix with the water essentially posing no threat, lying dormant under layers of soil on the bottom. Most of the chemicals of concern were later determined to be "legacy chemicals" (meaning that they are

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present due to use many decades ago) with origins varying from herbicides used by the highway department back in the '50s and '60s to gold mining operations in the late 1800s and early 1900s. Most of the chemicals of concern had not been used since the 1970s and were no longer manufactured by 1980 and were certainly not from golf course or landscaping nutrients. Over the years these chemicals were carried in by silt and sediment from dirt road scraping, drainage ditches, highway improvements, and natural erosion, reinforcing the importance of monitoring and reducing silt and sedimentation but telling us little about our "water" quality.

After full investigation of these findings the Tallulah River Watershed Council (TRWC) wanted an answer to the burning question "Is our water safe?" and took the lead in getting an answer. This task took a tremendous commitment of

networking for technical information, GPC cooperation, and funding. With the assistance of professionals at Georgia Tech, GPC Environmental Division, the Georgia Environmental Protection Division (GA EPD), and some diligent volunteers at the TRWC along with the stalwart support of a few of our lake associations the ever louder drumbeat was finally answered.

#### **WHAT WAS DONE**

The TRWC Water Quality Task Force took on the task of seeking out a viable method to get a broad spectrum test for multiple pesticides, herbicides, and fungicides done. After contacting numerous water testing companies it became apparent that the University of Georgia Cooperative Extension Services Pesticide and Hazardous Waste Laboratory in Athens was the premiere facility to test our water. This is the lab that is used by the GA EPD and many of the municipalities in the southeast to test their raw water intake and actual drinking water. What we needed was a company that had a working relationship with this lab that could pull the samples in the correct manner, take charge of the chain of custody, get the appropriate tests done, and provide us a verifiable report and summary of the technical data. Compass Environmental, Inc. in Kennesaw, Georgia has vast experience in all types of environmental testing and was excited about the opportunity to assist in this undertaking. Eva M. Ewing, one of the owners and Senior Scientist for Compass Environmental, took personal charge of this project. She conferred with Dr. Parshall Bush, who has been the testing laboratory's program coordinator since 1972, about which chemicals should be tested for and he created a list of 62 that would cover all of the likely chemicals that could be present in the products used around our lake. On September 6th, 2012 four samples were drawn from each of the six locations detailed in the September LBCA newsletter, put on ice, and immediately transported to the laboratory.



There was an intentional effort to do this testing under the worst case scenario in an attempt to know our worst possible exposure. Spring and summer offer the heaviest continual usage of these chemicals, the water temperature was at its highest of the year, and there had been 1.5 inches of rainfall in the week leading up to the day of sampling. Two of the test locations were the centers of two coves that take direct runoff from the Lake Burton Club golf course and community. Needless to say we, along with GPC, were very curious to see how the readings would vary from location to location.

## THE RESULTS

Upon receiving the data, Compass Environmental immediately let the TRWC know that not only was the level of all chemicals below permissible levels in recreational waterways and below permissible levels in drinking water, none of them were even detectable in all six of the test locations! Yes, I did say below permissible levels in “drinking water.” Now I am not suggesting that any of us start drinking the water from the lake but I am saying that the question about organic synthetics has been undeniably answered. The full of the report (introduction, methods, analytical results, conclusion, and qualifications and a full listing of the chemicals tested at each site) is available at the TRWC website which may be accessed at: [www.tallulahriverwatershed.com](http://www.tallulahriverwatershed.com).

## COMMENTARY

Needless to say I am exuberant about the results. This is tremendously good news for all of us on Lake Burton and all that enjoy swimming, skiing, and fishing in these waters. This report is the culmination of a tremendous amount of cooperative effort and perseverance of many folks, both volunteer and professional. The TRWC has been the driving force to accomplish this milestone and should be commended and supported by all of us. Going forward they will continually be setting the standards and raising the bar for the protection of this watershed. GPC is also to be commended as a strong supporting partner in this effort. This testing was done with their blessings to compliment their testing, not

compete with it. A very strong cooperative partnership between TRWC and GPC has emerged during this process. Also to be commended are you, the members and the leadership of the LBCA. The LBCA funded this water testing project through a donation to the TRWC along with an additional donation to assist the TRWC with its day to day increasing operational expenses. This is certainly money well spent. Some of our sister lakes are also actively providing financial support to the TRWC realizing that they are becoming the central source of information and action toward protecting these precious jewels. Our lakes currently rival any watershed in the country in purity and beauty. We are all charged with making sure it stays that way.

## GPC SILTATION AND SEDIMENTATION MONITORING PROGRAM UNDERWAY

The first round of bottom mapping was completed in September. The first round of mapping took over two weeks of zigzagging, back and forth across tributaries and coves with a boat equipped with a combination of GPS and sonar equipment. This year the waypoints were established and in future years the same GPS locations will be “pinged” which will show us bottom depth changes, delta shifts, and silt encroachment on the lake. Over time the pace and volume of silt intrusion can be determined. The upper parts of Timpson, Tallulah, and Dicks will be remapped every September for the foreseeable future. Again this was the result of much consultation between TRWC and GPC about the benefits of such a program. GPC looked into the resources they had available and found that the boat they use to map the bottoms of the ash ponds at their power plants was capable of performing this task. They agreed that over time much could be gained from this project and initiated it at their own expense. Again, what a great partner we have in GPC. We should all be grateful for the service Jeff Jackson and the GPC provide. Again I encourage you to go to the TRWC website for more on this project.

## IN CLOSING

It was certainly good news that none of these chemicals were even detectable in our lake but I also want to warn that we must not fall into a false sense of security. It is often a thin line a watershed walks between fragility and resilience. Conditions can change rapidly, being impacted by everything from the economy to Mother Nature. We must never let our guard down. Each of us should always be assessing whether or not we are utilizing the best management practices of our own properties. Much good advice is available on the TRWC website about what each of us can do to be good stewards of the lake. As a reminder of how fortunate we are you should read a letter that GPC sent out to its residents on Lake Harding and Lake Oliver (on the Chattahoochee). They have been the victims of the “perfect storm” of drought, low river flow, hot weather, and warm water temperatures causing invasive exotic plants to appear and thrive in their lakes. It has become so severe that GPC is using special aquatic herbicides to fight these plants to keep some boating channels open. You should read this letter closely and realize how important the advice we constantly give you about your landscaping, mowing, fertilizing, and leaf blowing habits really is.

Thanks again to all of you for doing what you can to keep our watershed pristine for the generations that will follow us. As always, I will do my best to answer any of your questions and address any of your concerns.

## **Bill Russell**

Water Quality and Environmental Chair, LBCA  
Water Quality Task Force Leader, TRWC

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## West Rabun Property Owners

West Rabun Property Owners is an all-volunteer political action organization focused on quality of life issues affecting its constituency in western Rabun County. "Seeking Leadership and Accountability in Government" is more than just WRPO's tagline — it is the mission which guides its every effort.

Past and present accomplishments and activities include:

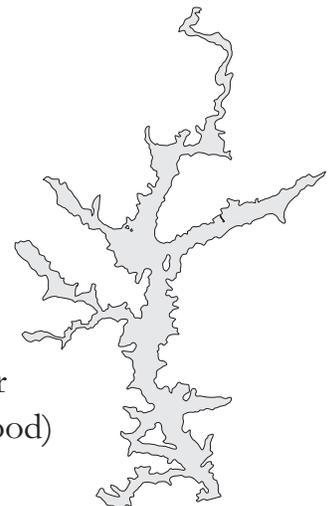
- ▶ **Initiating a study regarding steps necessary to improve fire department capabilities and reduce home insurance rates**
- ▶ **Partnering with the Sherriff's Department to initiate and fund the Neighborhood Watch program**
- ▶ **Interviewing candidates for local office and recommending via "sample" ballots those individuals believed likely to best represent the interest of WRPO members**
- ▶ **Distributing quarterly newsletters which inform and educate members regarding issues of interest and importance in Rabun County**

LBCA members will find enclosed a copy of this year's version of the sample ballot for the local election. WRPO officers are currently working to ensure that paving of unpaved county roads is a key feature of the local option sales tax extension that will be voted on in a special election in March 2013.

The \$12 annual membership fee is one of the best bargains anywhere. WRPO complements rather than competes against the efforts of the LBCA. To join, go to [www.westrabunpropertyowners.com](http://www.westrabunpropertyowners.com) to obtain a membership application, e-mail [rainbows@hemc.net](mailto:rainbows@hemc.net) to express your interest in joining, or call 706-782-4043.

## LBCA Calendar For 2012-2013\*

November 23, 2012	Directory Info Request and Membership Statements Mailed
December 31, 2012	Membership Fees For 2013 Are Due
January 15, 2013	Membership Fees Must Be Paid / Directory Cutoff
March 24, 2013	Winter Board of Directors Meeting
March 31, 2013	Tallulah Persimmon VFD Barbeque Fund Raiser
May 19, 2013	Spring Board of Directors Meeting
June 8, 2013	Boating Safety Course
June 15, 2013	Annual Meeting
July 4, 2013	Earl Patton Duck Tape Regatta
July 5, 2013	Lake Burton Fun Run
July 6, 2013	Fourth of July Fireworks
July 13, 2013	Wildcat VFD Fabulous Fried Chicken Fund Raiser
August 2, 2013	22nd Annual LBCA Golf Tournament (at Kingwood)
October 20, 2013	Fall Board of Directors Meeting



\* For the most up-to-date information, please see the calendar page at [www.lbca.net](http://www.lbca.net).