



LBCA

September 2013

Newsletter

President's Letter

Dear Friends,

It certainly has been a summer of contrasts. The sun has shone very little but we have beautiful greenery and abundant wildflowers and fast growing trees. My vegetable garden just enriched the soil with more organic matter and no harvest. Glad we were not dependent on our land for food. The high water on the Fourth of July weekend was a "perfect storm," harming docks and catwalks for many of us. We must all be aware that we are responsible for our boat wakes and the damage that they can cause.

Please always think about your neighbors when boating at such times. If we all are considerate of each other we can minimize the affect of acts of nature.

There is an important survey accompanying this issue that I hope you each will take the time to complete to help aid us in rebuilding our website and making our lake community more connected.

This is a very important step and we need your help to determine the best ways of addressing your interests.

The Lake Burton Civic Association was a Gold Sponsor for the Lake Burton

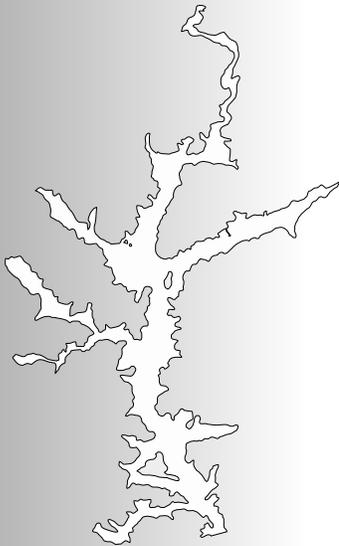
Fun Run 2013 and had a booth at the event with information and Lake Burton items for sale. The Fun Run folks appreciated our participation and the exposure there was a plus for the association.



The 22nd Annual LBCA Golf Tournament was a success – raising over \$13,000 for the three area Volunteer Fire Departments that do so much for us. The golfers seemed to have a great time. I appreciate everyone who helped make this event a success as well as all the donors who are listed on the back page of this newsletter. A very special thanks goes to Crawford Grice who ran the golf part of the tournament. Crawford worked for weeks to make the tournament a success.

A happy and safe fall to all,

Becky Callahan
Becky Callahan



Special thanks to Crawford Grice who worked for weeks to make the LBCA Golf Tournament a success.



Pass-Through Taxes on Leased Lots by Nolan Leake

On July 10, 2013, Georgia Power e-mailed a notice to all lessees of lake lots on Lake Burton and Lake Rabun that it had appealed the 2012 tax valuations on those lots. The e-mail also stated that the bill sent by Georgia Power in July was only a partial, interim bill for the 2012 taxes and that the lessees' final bill for taxes would be sent after the appeal was concluded. (The bill which you just received is for the 2012 tax year because Georgia Power bills lessees for taxes it paid in the prior year, not the year in which it sends the bill.)

The appeal for 2012 and the substantial increases in the amount of taxes billed to lessees over the last several years, have prompted many questions by LBCA members. This article will try to provide information to answer those questions. Most of the information was provided by Jeff Jackson, Georgia Power's Lake Resource Manager. This article addresses only the valuation of the land portion of leased lots (which Georgia Power owns), not the buildings or other improvements on the lot (which the lessee owns). Taxes on all improvements on leased lots, and the land and improvements on fee-simple lots, are handled differently from the land portion of leased lots. They are valued, assessed, and billed directly by the Rabun County Tax Assessor's office.

Because Georgia Power owns the land on the leased lots and is a state-regulated utility, the value of that land is determined by the Georgia State Board of Equalization pursuant to a special state law pertaining to taxation of utilities. The Board consists of the State Revenue Commissioner, the State Auditor, and the Director of the State Properties Commission. As a

practical matter, however, the State Department of Revenue (DOR) handles the valuation of utility property for the State Board.

Georgia Power filed its appeal of the 2012 lake lot values in January. The appeal will be heard in the Superior Court of Fulton County, the court to which utility property tax appeals are made. The DOR determined that the 2012 tax values on Lake Burton lots should be increased over the 2011 tax values. Georgia Power disagreed, saying that the 2012 values should decrease from the 2011 values. Georgia Power's valuation is supported by appraisals made by two different firms.

Based upon its appeal, Georgia Power has paid 80% of the 2011 value for the tax year 2012. That meant that the amount of the interim tax bills that Georgia Power mailed to lessees in July was 20% less than the 2011 values. Thus lessees should keep this in mind: If Georgia Power does not fully prevail in this appeal and has to pay further taxes for 2012, it will be sending lessees an additional tax bill for the 2012 tax year and that bill could be substantial.

Currently, the Superior Court has directed Georgia Power and the State to enter into mediation before proceeding further with the appeal. Meanwhile, the parties have been discussing their differences, so a resolution could be reached in the near future if these negotiations succeed. If fully litigated, the appeal could take a couple of years.

Tax valuation on utility properties by the DOR, like most tax appraisals everywhere, use "mass appraisal" to determine value. Mass appraisal is the appraisal of large

groups of what are considered to be similarly-situated properties using standardized methods and then applying the standardized results from the group to each of the properties in the group. This is quite different from taking each individual property and trying to make an appraisal of it separately. Furthermore, appraisals of either kind involve judgment calls on how to apply sales, construction costs, and depreciation in the area to decide values for particular properties. The result, therefore, is only an estimate of value which will necessarily be off from "true" market value by varying amounts.

As provided in paragraph 25 of the leases with lessees, Georgia Power has the discretion to simply divide the taxes they pay on all of the lake lots by the number of lake lots and bill each lessee an equal amount. Georgia Power used this method until a few years ago when tax valuations got so high that this rough allocation led to noticeable discrepancies between taxes on some lots and the underlying value of those lots. To reduce such discrepancies, leased lots on Lake Burton are now valued based upon which of three general markets they fall: (1) main lake (including portions of major coves with wide water), (2) secondary market (smaller coves), and (3) river market (lake above the US 76 bridge).

Finally, many lessees whose lots were denuded by the tornado asked that their 2012 valuations be reduced to reflect that damage. DOR reduced the lot values for those lots by 30% for the 2012 year. For 2013 and thereafter, however, it will look at actual sales in the tornado-damaged areas to decide what reduction, if any, is justified by those sales.



Changes to LBCA Bylaws Provide Family Memberships . . . at Reduced Rate

by Bill Bomar

Lake Burton Civic Association membership is open to any person or organization interested in the important issues facing everyone in Rabun County and the area around Lake Burton. We are encouraging all adult families of our Regular Members to join the LBCA at 50% of the already low Regular Membership dues amount. To make it easy, the Civic Association's membership application and information form has been redesigned to include a new category: Family Membership. Members are encouraged to include adult children and their families, who use and enjoy this beautiful area in Rabun County and around Lake Burton, as Family Members on the LBCA membership application and information form when it is submitted this fall. These family members can also join separately as Family Members by submitting a separate application and identifying the related Regular Member on their form. Regular and Family Memberships in the LBCA include individuals and spouses living within, or adjacent to, the boundary roads around Lake Burton (US 76, GA 197, Burton Dam Road, Bridge Creek Road, and Charlie Mountain Road), and all subdivisions fronting on those roads. Associate Membership is open to any person or organization interested in supporting the LBCA and receives all benefits of Regular Membership, except for voting at the Annual Members meeting, or serving as an officer or on the board of directors of the LBCA. Annual Regular and

Associate Membership dues are \$100. Family Membership dues are only an additional \$50 per Family Membership.

A significant portion of your dues to the LBCA and your contributions to fund-raising events through the Lake Burton Civic Association Foundation support the three Volunteer Fire Departments and the Lake Burton Fire Boat serving the area around Lake Burton. Your dues are also used by LBCA to address environmental and other issues, to support several Rabun County charities and other organizations working in the county, for member communications, and to pay the civic association operating costs. To learn more about the many things that the LBCA does for you, please explore our website at www.lbca.net. In order to achieve our objectives for your benefit, we work with Georgia Power Company, the West Rabun Property Owners Association, the Tallulah River Watershed Council, and Rabun County officials on various issues throughout the year. The LBCA needs your support in order to continue to work within the lake and west Rabun community. With approximately 950 families as members, we are able to have an important voice in the county. Please join and encourage your family members, friends, and neighbors to also join.

Please complete the membership application and information form for yourselves and your Family Members when you receive it in several weeks, or download it from

our website at www.lbca.net, and return it along with your dues and directory information to LBCA, P.O. Box 1988, Clayton, GA 30525. The LBCA sends the newsletter out by e-mail and from time to time we send out e-mail alerts with important information. Please include your e-mail address on the form to receive this important information. If you would like to receive the newsletter by e-mail only, you may indicate this on the form.

Again, we encourage all adult children enjoying their Lake Burton area property with Regular Members to become Family Members so that they may directly receive the newsletters and other benefits of membership. More importantly, these memberships help the LBCA in its efforts to address the major issues facing all of us in the area. The small amount of dues you pay to the LBCA is a great investment to your property for you and your family.

Brick Sales For Park Continue

We encourage everyone to keep in mind that the opportunity to buy personalized bricks for Lake Burton Park will continue into the fall. Ordering is easy, just visit:

www.thatsmybrick.com/lakeburtonpark

The cost is \$75 per brick and credit cards are accepted. Personalized bricks are a unique and lasting way to recall people, places, and events we have all cherished through the years on Lake Burton.



Judy Varn Hays

- NEW LBCA DIRECTOR -

Bob Varn and I and 5-year-old twins, Rob & Lilly, bought a small cabin on Moccasin Cove in 1976. We spent as much time as possible here while the kids were growing up: swimming, skiing, hiking, rocking on the porch, and socializing with friends on the lake. Bob died in 2000, the children are grown with children of their own, and I married Spurgeon Hays, a retired Episcopal priest, in 2006. We all still love the lake, and I am the “air traffic controller”, scheduling all our (four) children and their families during the summer months. I did a major remodeling of the cabin in 2004, and it blew away in the tornado in 2011! We now have a brand new house and are spending more and more time here.



I am a native Atlantan, and Spurgeon and I live in Vinings. I am a long-time member of Trinity Presbyterian Church, was Assistant Treasurer of the Atlanta Junior League, President of Planters Garden Club, and, for many years, tutored children at what is now the Agape Center in the Bolton Community. I love to play Bridge and have recently taken up golf. Looking forward to many more years in this wonderful spot!

Ron Majors

- NEW LBCA DIRECTOR -

My wife Sandy and I have owned a home in the Dick’s Creek Cove area of the lake for eighteen years. In 2002 we demolished the old house and built our current lake home. We have one son, Stephen, who lives in Washington, D.C. and returns to the lake twice every summer for visits and renewal.



I am a civil engineer by education. I worked for thirty-eight years in the construction industry as a construction scheduling consultant and as an arbitrator and mediator with the American Arbitration Association. I’ve been retired since 2010.

I’ve served on the LBCA board before, several years ago. My other interests include golf, lake living, preserving the environment, and reading on current events.

Playing in the Dirt: Lake Burton Garden Club

We had a wonderful turnout for our first meeting of the Lake Burton Garden Club with 16 people attending. After the introductions, Andy Anderson passed out plans for the Lake Burton Park as well as a resume for Christina Gibson, the landscape designer for the park. She could not be there, but she sent a sheet of “brainstorming” ideas for how best to capture the spirit and history of Lake Burton through seasonal gardens and native plant communities.



It was decided that the garden club structure would be informal with minimal meeting and administrative time and most of the emphasis placed on having an active list of volunteers who could be called upon for planting and maintenance of Lake Burton Park. Andy said that we could expect the park to be ready for volunteer work some time around the end of September or October. We will organize several volunteer times so that people can sign up. It was also suggested that a Facebook group be formed for the Garden Club and Kathleen Moore volunteered to help with that task. Gaston Brawley is going to be our P.R. Man and he took pictures at the end of the meeting to send to the Clayton newspaper and to the Lake Burton Civic Association.

If you are interested in volunteering please contact Lin Goen by phone at 770-356-1758 or via e-mail at lingoen@yahoo.com.



Everything You Don't Want to Know About Septic Systems . . . Until You Do!

by Kent Gustafson

Introduction

This article focuses on a topic that most homeowners do not think of as being important; until they do - when their septic systems fail to perform. Backed up toilets or drains, smelly surface water around the drain field, odors, or a film on water near the system are some of the symptoms homeowners have come to dread. Sometimes the failure results from a poorly designed or installed system, but often is the result of owner neglect. This article deals only briefly with installation since hopefully that is a one-time occurrence for most of us, while highlighting how our systems work and what we should do to maintain them. It concludes with a discussion of the claimed benefits of additives.

Installation

System installation is best left to an experienced contractor since it must be designed to match local conditions and the size of the home. The system must also pass inspection from local authorities, usually the health department that also has to issue a permit for its construction. New technology is making more options available in some locations and should be considered. There are several qualified and experienced contractors in the area, but like any other major expenditure, obtaining references and consulting local authorities is advised. This is no place to try to be too "penny-wise."

How it Works

Without getting too technical, septic systems accept household wastewater and related solids into a tank where they are gradually separated, with the solids settling to the bottom and the water flowing into

a second area generally referred to as a drain field. The solids will gradually be "digested" in the tank by bacterial action and form sludge that builds up from the bottom while on the surface the more water-like content moves to the drain field where it is processed by the surrounding soil. Over time the layer of solids (really semi-solids) builds up and must be pumped to avoid the solids and sludge from either blocking flow to the drain field or penetrating the field and making it inoperable. This failure is when the homeowner faces major expense and risks pollution of the area around the system and beyond (i.e., our lakes and streams). Significant legal liabilities may also result. For more detailed information on how septic systems operate see publication [1] in the list at the end of this article.

Care and Feeding

What should and should not go into a septic system? Generally all wastewater from normal household activities can safely enter the system. Items to avoid introducing include: dental floss, tampons and other feminine hygiene products, condoms, diapers, cotton swabs, cigarettes, coffee grounds, cat litter, paper towels, lint from washing machines, and any kitchen products with a potential to clog parts of the system. Garbage disposal use is acceptable, but extensive use shortens the length of time between needed pumping of the tank. Household chemicals, gasoline, paint, oil, pesticides, and anti-freeze can kill bacteria in the tank and may contaminate surrounding soil and groundwater. Excessive water flow into the tank from dripping faucets or toilets, large amounts of laundry from "high water" models of washing

machines and connecting external drains can overwhelm its capacity. When doing many loads of laundry it is desirable to spread them out over multiple days to reduce water intake. Too much water too fast is a significant cause of system failure.

Only grass should be planted over the drain field and when possible avoid locating it near trees and shrubs whose roots can penetrate the system resulting in reduced effectiveness and eventual failure. Don't park vehicles or other heavy objects on the tank or field since this can compact the soil and collapse the tank. Routing drains from gutters and downspouts away from the field is desirable as is landscaping to avoid having surface water collect on or near it.

Pumping and Related Maintenance

The most frequently asked septic system question is: when should I pump? Unfortunately, there is no simple answer to this question, but "after it is blocked up" is not a very good answer. Several variables affect the frequency of pumping required. One is the size of the tank. Generally larger tanks require less frequent pumping given the same amount of use. According to the University of Minnesota (in publication [2] referenced in the list at the end of this article) other factors include: garbage disposal use, water conditioning equipment that adds salt and often large amounts of water, faucets and showers that are not "low flow," and toxic or harsh cleaning agents that reduce bacteria count. The number of people living in the household, having frequent guests, and hosting large events all can impact how often your

Continued on next page . . .



Septic Systems . . . *Continued from previous page*

system may need to be serviced. Septic systems having macerator pump up systems, commonly used in basement bathrooms that are at a lower elevation than the septic tank, also may require more frequent pumping. The complete numerical guidelines in the above cited publication have been criticized as being too vague, but do provide general guidance. Another factor for the many part-time residents on the lake to consider is that generally they can pump less frequently due to the low demand placed on the system.

A table of suggested pumping frequency based on tank size and number of people in the household is available at link [3] in the list at the end of this article. Consider this only as a general guide. Inspection to determine the amount of solid and sludge accumulation and thus the need for pumping also is an option, but the cost compared to pumping should be considered before selecting this course of action. It does have the advantage of determining the rate of buildup so as to derive an appropriate pumping schedule.

How do I find my tank is another common question, especially from people having made a recent home purchase? Unless you are skilled at reading the topography around your home and thinking like a contractor, this is best left to experts. Often they can quickly locate the tank using nothing more than a sharp metal rod and probing in the suspected area. This will not work if the tank is deep in the ground and they may resort to a frequency transmitter capsule that is flushed down a toilet and its signal detected when it arrives in the tank. In other words, not knowing the location of the tank is not an excuse for inaction. "Pay a little now or a lot

later" may be sound advice if you are uncertain when the tank was last pumped or where it is located. Several reputable pumping companies operate in the area and getting more than one quote is desirable.

Additives

Well over 1,000 additives are marketed on the claim they will improve septic system performance. Many tank pumping companies will encourage their customers to view a video presentation on tape or DVD at the time their system is being pumped and may even offer incentives to do so. The object of course is to sell their preferred additive; kind of like the car repair company promoting various "add-ons" that add particularly to their bottom line. According to the National Small Flow Clearinghouse at the University of West Virginia (see link [4] in the list at the end of this article) other claims as beneficial additives include sulfuric acid, formaldehyde, baking soda, hydrogen peroxide, and alum. None are believed to be effective and some, such as sulfuric acid, are both dangerous to handle and corrosive to the septic system. Their report continues, "Contrary to popular belief yeast, dead chickens, possums, or raw hamburger do not need to be added to the septic tank." (see link [5] in the list at the end of this article) Exactly how some of these items could be introduced into the system baffles these writers, but feel free to speculate.

In general, regular use of the system assures introduction of bacteria necessary for its continuing to

function properly. There may be very special circumstances under which an additive could be beneficial. These include heavy use of antibiotics or other prescriptive medications in the household or large amounts of toxic cleaners (e.g., Lysol, Drano, bleach) having been introduced into the system. However, according to the above cited report from the National Small Flow Clearinghouse, "Claims made for the effectiveness of additives to either eliminate pumping of a septic tank or restore permeability of the soil absorption system are unsubstantiated. No product will allow a homeowner to escape a regular septic tank pumping and maintenance schedule." And additives are definitely of no value after the system has failed.

Conclusion

Septic system maintenance and servicing is not complicated, but does have some costs and should be part of every homeowner's routine. This will avoid major cost and inconvenience at some point in the future while also assuring the system does not become a source of pollution to our pristine lake and watershed. For further information contact the local extension office, department of health, the numerous publications from the National Small Flow Clearinghouse, and other cited sources.

As always your comments and questions are welcome and we are eager to hear of any other water quality or environmental issues you would like us to write about in future columns.

Links to Publications Referenced in This Article:

- [1] www.nesc.wvu.edu/pdf/ww/septic/epa_septic_guide.pdf
- [2] septic.umn.edu/prod/groups/cfans/@pub/@cfans/@ostp/documents/asset/cfans_asset_126408.pdf
- [3] pubs.cas.psu.edu/freepubs/pdfs/F161.pdf
- [4] www.nesc.wvu.edu/subpages/septic.cfm
- [5] www.nesc.wvu.edu/pdf/ww/septic/additives_sfqw02.pdf



Being Firewise by Pat Leake

While we have been dealing with nearly biblical flooding this summer we must also remember the droughts of recent years and the possibility of wildfires being a hazard to our families and homes on Lake Burton. There are steps you can take to reduce this risk and the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) has developed a program, Firewise®, to educate us about them.

One of easiest ways to make your home safer from wildfires is to create a fuel-free perimeter of three to five feet around your house. There should be no high-resin or oily trees in this area. The area from five to thirty feet from your house should be kept free of dead leaves and needles. Roofs and decks should be free of these as well. There is a list of preferred plants on the Firewise® website: www.firewise.org.

Another important consideration is emergency responder access. Access roads and driveways need to be a minimum of twelve feet wide with a vertical clearance of fifteen feet and a slope of no more than five percent to allow

access by emergency vehicles.

If you are building or remodeling, there are additional things you can do to improve your fire safety. Use fire-rated shingles and a fire-resistant sub-roof. Roof and attic vents should be screened to prevent entry by wind-born embers. If your decks and porches are not constructed of fire-resistant materials, they increase the vulnerability of your home.

The NFPA would love to talk to groups of neighbors about making their areas Firewise Communities®. For their purposes, a community is a group of as few as three homes. If you are willing to coordinate this effort with your neighbors please contact Becky Callahan

at tbcallahan@aol.com. Once you have a group of neighbors who are interested, they will provide free information, including an assessment of homes and roads. To schedule a visit contact Shannon Dean, Chief Ranger, 706-754-2354 or sdean@gfc.state.ga.us.

Home Safety Checklist

reprinted from How to Have a Firewise® Home

- ♦ **Clean roofs and gutters of dead leaves, debris, and pine needles that could catch embers.**
- ♦ **Replace or repair any loose or missing shingles or roof tiles to prevent ember penetration.**
- ♦ **Enclose under-eave and soffit vents or screen with a metal mesh to prevent ember penetration.**
- ♦ **Cover exterior attic vents with metal wire mesh no larger than 1/8 inch to prevent sparks from entering the home.**
- ♦ **Repair or replace damaged or loose window screens and any broken window screens and any broken windows.**
- ♦ **Screen or box-in areas below patios and decks with wire mesh to prevent debris and combustible materials from accumulating.**
- ♦ **Move any flammable material away from wall exteriors – mulch, flammable plants, leaves and needles, firewood piles – anything that can burn.**
- ♦ **Remove anything stored under decks or porches.**

And of course, have and practice an emergency action plan. Know two ways out of your neighborhood and have a predesignated meeting place. Have tools such as a shovel, rake, axe, handsaw, or chainsaw available and maintain an emergency water source.

LBCA Website Redesign Project

The LBCA Board is initiating a project to redesign and enhance the capabilities of its website and related communication channels. The intent is to create a more attractive and interactive site that provides an increased level of service to members. The first step in that process is seeking your input via the enclosed survey. There are two options for submitting your comments and opinions. One option is to complete and mail the accompanying paper copy following its included instructions. The second option is to submit an electronic response by following the link to the online survey on our web site (www.lbca.net) and following the instructions. If you experience any problems completing the survey, please contact Kent Gustafson at kentgustafson@windstream.net.

The plan is to begin the redesign within 4-6 weeks, so your immediate reply would be much appreciated. Also, we are particularly interested in finding volunteers to assist on this project.

Lake Burton Park Work Weekend

Grab your gloves, boots, shovels, and trowels for an opportunity to “dig in the dirt” at Lake Burton Park on Saturday and Sunday, October 19th and 20th. The fun begins each day at 9:00 A.M. and continues until noon. Kids are welcome. Cold drinks will be provided. This will be of first of several plantings of various shrubs, trees and perennials. Please contact Lin Goen if possible at 770-356-1758 or lingoen@yahoo.com so that we may anticipate the turnout. Help us say, “I built that!”





22nd Annual LBCA Golf Tournament

Congratulations to the Winners of This Year's Tournament!

1st Flight

First Place

Mike Shiflet
Jeff Jackson
Johnny Cannon
Mark Seagers

2nd Place

Jason Griffin
Keith Stapleton
Wesley Dodd
Tim Lovell

2nd Flight

First Place

Ken Graves
Bruce Woodward
Mike Egan
Mike Hammer

2nd Place

Tom Usilton
Chip Davidson
Jeff Rodbell
Peter Pomeroy

3rd Flight

First Place

Bob Pruitt
Bill Farr
Bill Smith
Whit Yates

2nd Place

Phil Chastain
Armand Wells
Richard Mueller
Charlie Brundage

4th Flight

First Place

Dick Cawood
Bob Sheehan
Jack Wray
Bruce Merrill

2nd Place

Ed Dobbs
Dennis Love
Dave Culley
Spencer Welch

Closest to Pin

Number 4

Whit Yates

Number 6

Steve Williams

Number 9

Ross George

Number 11

Peter Pomeroy

Number 14

Bruce Propst

Sponsors and Contributors

The Lake Burton Civic Association and our area Volunteer Fire Departments wish to express our gratitude to the following individuals and businesses for their generosity in supporting the 22nd Annual LBCA Golf Tournament.

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