

When The Unfortunate Happens

By Chris Spiller,
Chief Ranger

Just a few weeks ago a major storm blew through the area causing a lot of damage to our neighbor's property next to and just up the road from the lake. Our beautiful lakeshore suffered some damage as well, and we decided that it would be a good time to let our new adjacent land partners know what to do when the unfortunate happens to public land.

First and foremost, we ask that you contact our office at 1-800-533-3478 as soon as possible so that a Ranger can assess the damage and report the findings. When you call to report the damage please notify our dispatcher of the exact location, provide a brief description of the damage, your name and contact information. An available Ranger will be dispatched to the area as soon as possible. Once the initial assessment is completed, your Area Ranger will contact you to discuss the situation and what actions the Corps is planning to take. The Area Ranger will also set up a time to meet with you on site to answer any questions you may have.

Robert Snyder, Elbert County, GA resident, surveys the remains of his dock destroyed by a tornado on March 15, 2008.



As you know, with any widespread disaster our staff will be receiving numerous calls. We will respond to the hardest hit areas first, so please be patient. We will contact you as soon as possible.

As always, thank you for your continued support of our beautiful lake and we hope to see you out enjoying it soon.

U.S. ARMY CORPS OF ENGINEERS J. STROM THURMOND LAKE & THE UNITED STATES POWER SQUADRONS & UNITED STATES COAST GUARD AUXILIARY are offering "AMERICA'S BOATING COURSE"

This one day boating safety course will complete the mandatory boating education requirements of both South Carolina and Georgia.

WHERE: Thurmond Lake Visitors Center (North of the dam in South Carolina on Route 221)

WHEN: Saturday, May 10, 2008

TIME: 8:30 AM until 4:30 PM, with one hour lunch break (bring your own lunch or drive a few miles to a restaurant)

TUITION: \$35 for individual or \$50 for entire family

SUBJECTS:

- Know your boat – hull types, performance and power
- Things to do before getting underway
- Navigation on our waterways
- Boat operating techniques and safety procedures
- Legal requirements (SC, GA and Federal)
- How to handle boating emergencies
- Water sports (PWCs, sailing, hunting and fishing) safety issues

RESERVATIONS:

Call or e-mail 864-391-2170 jlvano@wctel.net
864-391-2761 oneillwilly@wctel.net
800-533-3478 john.c.weidman@usace.army.mil

NOTE: Most insurance companies give graduates a discount!



Spring 2008

Lake Times

J. Strom Thurmond, Savannah District, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers



WHAM! THUMP! BUMP! SCREEECH!....

By Jay Weidman, Park Ranger

What's that sound you say? Could it be the sound of your shiny boat hitting a rock, a decades old tree stump, running up on a submerged island or some other obstruction? You steel yourself and look over the stern. Oh gosh... what a battered mess! After making your way back to the ramp, compliments of a tow by a sympathetic boater, or by snailing along on your trolling motor, you get loaded up and take a good look at the damage. You wish you hadn't. A badly bent stainless steel prop, some lower unit damage, and a number of gouges in the hull and some spider web cracks in the transom stare back at you. And what was making that grinding noise you heard inside the engine? Reluctantly, you head off to the repair shop to get a professional opinion on the damage. The shop guys listen to your story and nod knowingly. They'll give you a call with an estimate. A couple of days later, your phone rings... it's the boat shop. Gently putting the phone down and staring at the figure you wrote on a pad, you look carefully around to make sure no one else is there to watch a grown man cry.

By now everyone knows this part of the country is still in the middle of a prolonged drought. Since the first of the year, rainfall is only around 65 percent of normal. As this article is written, Thurmond Lake is still 9 feet below full pool. While the lake level has come up around 5 feet over the winter, there are still plenty of things around in the water to hit with a boat if one is not careful. Rocks, tree stumps, small submerged islands, and shallow areas in the blow through that many boaters are in the habit of blasting in and out of in the interest of saving a bit of time, all lie in wait for the inattentive, the distracted, or the "Gotta go fast so I got more fishin' time." types.

Within the marked navigation channels, many obstructions have been identified to warn the boater of an existing hazard. Even if you are in the buoyed channel, play it smart and don't assume everything is marked. While every reasonable effort is made to maintain navigation aids, the ravages of nature take their toll and markers are sometimes destroyed or blown away.

Outside the marked channel, hazards are not marked. When venturing into these areas be very careful! Regular boaters typically get to know an area well and are familiar with the prop-bending, boat-grabbing obstacles lurking about. Still, pay attention! You may not know everything out there. Many tree stumps collect an amazing rainbow of hull colors compliments of passing boats. Boaters who "find" hidden objects, most commonly trees just below the surface, often use milk jugs, plastic soft drink bottles or other floating objects to mark their "finds".

Even if the lake remains low, there's still a lot of water out there to support your favorite boating activity. Just use some common sense, slow down a bit and keep a sharp eye out. Having a buddy along not only provides companionship, but an extra pair of eyes to look for trees, rocks, etc., while you drive, making things a bit safer. Pay particular attention to changes in wave patterns, water color and shoreline topography. Any variation in the first two is an indication the water is getting shallower. If the nearby shore is flat with long points running out into the water, that part of the lake is also probably fairly shallow. Setting your depth finder alarm at around 10 feet, will give you some advanced warning of shoaling water.

Last, but most importantly, don't forget to check out, clean up, and service all your safety equipment. Check your state's boating regulations for specific requirements. Make sure all the navigation lights work, the fire extinguisher is charged, and all the PFD'S (lifejackets) are in good shape and the correct size to fit your passengers. Be alert, be smart, and save the alcoholic refreshments for when the day's boating activities are done. Now, get out there and have some fun on the water!



Chuck Chapel, Lakeside Marine, Leah, GA, holds two propellers damaged as a result of a boat collision with a submerged object.

Savannah District

US Army Corps
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Uncle Sam Wants You!

By Pepper Shields, Park Ranger

Many people often comment about how they long for a job in the outdoors. "Some place quiet, scenic, and close to nature". Well, now is your chance! The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers at J. Strom Thurmond Project is soliciting volunteers to help in the areas of Natural Resource Management, Recreation, and Shoreline Management. Volunteers may be assigned a task to work and assist specific Park Rangers, or may be assigned tasks such as trail building and maintenance, making minor repairs on park equipment, assisting in Water Safety Programs, Visitor Use Surveys, helping out in the Visitor Center, and various other areas. The Corps partners with a wide variety of organizations such as Boy Scouts of America, Girl Scouts of America, & SORBA (Southern Off-Road Bicycle Association), just to name a few.

The volunteers pictured are, left to right, Dale Parrott, Sue Putman, and Paul Farrow. Paul and Dale have logged in hundreds of volunteer hours with SORBA and the Corps of Engineers, while working on the Keg Creek Loop & Wildwood Park portion of the Bartram Trail. Dale alone has volunteered more than 750 hours since the year 2000. Paul's specialty includes trail design, construction and maintenance, with a focus on bridge design and construction. He is also instrumental in the acquisition of Grants for the various Trail Projects. Paul has attended IMBA (International Mountain Bicycling Association) Trail Design School. Sue has been assisting Park Rangers in the Thurmond Shoreline Section of the Project, and has logged in almost 100 hours of volunteer service beginning in 2007. Sue is a Registered Nurse and licensed Paramedic. When not volunteering, she is hard at work teaching, and certifying Paramedics at the Augusta Technical College, in Augusta, Georgia.

Our volunteers are from many backgrounds and are multi-talented, so great assets to our Thurmond Project and the Nation. How about you? Think about the talents you have, and would be willing to share in service to your Nation. If you are interested, or would like more information on the Volunteer Program at J. Strom Thurmond Lake, Contact Park Ranger Jay Weidman, at 1-800-533-3478 ext. 1172, or 864-333-1172.



Star volunteers log nearly 1,000 hours of service.

The prolonged drought condition persisting across much of the upper Savannah River basin is not only affecting the lake level, it is also impacting the forest around Thurmond Lake. Most apparent is the large number of mature pine trees that have died as a result of Ips beetle infestations. The effects of the infestations can be seen in several highly visible areas including Cherokee Recreation Area, Parksville Wayside, Hamilton Branch State Park, and the South Carolina Army National Guard Training Site.

Ips beetles, a type of pine bark beetle, are always present in pine forests and rarely produce significant mortality. Healthy pine trees can normally expel the beetles through pitch tubes. However, since the pine trees are stressed due to the drought, they cannot fend off the beetle attacks as effectively. If the beetle population within an individual tree increases enough, they cut off the tree's water and nutrients. Eventually this causes the death of the tree and the beetles move on to the next victim.

To date, this has been the worst Ips beetle outbreak recorded at Thurmond Lake. The Forest, Fish, and Wildlife Section has been aggressively monitoring insect activity since last fall. A recent aerial survey found approximately 50 areas where pine tree mortality exceeded 50 trees per site. Each of these areas has been evaluated and where practical, the dead and dying trees are being salvaged by local loggers.

If the current rate of insect damage is any indication, the potential for significant Southern Pine Beetle infestations next spring and summer is extremely high if rainfall does not increase. Southern Pine Beetles, another type of pine bark beetle, are much more aggressive and are most active during warm weather. In 2001 and 2002, more than 2,000 acres of timber around Thurmond Lake was destroyed by these beetles in spite of aggressive salvage intended to slow the progress of the beetles.

One bright spot in this situation is that much of the infested timber that can be salvaged is turned into lumber or paper. Some of the funds received from the sale of the timber will be used to reforest the affected areas and repair trails and forest roads.

If you have any questions concerning the Corps' forestry operations, please contact Chief Ranger Allen Dean or District Forester Ean Jones at 1-800-533-3478.



Park Ranger Phil Stalvale marks a beetle infested tree for removal.

Continuing Drought Takes a Toll on Thurmond Lake's Forests

By Allen Dean, Chief Ranger,
and Ean Jones, District Forester



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