

TVA River Neighbors



Navigation • Flood Reduction • Power Supply • Land Use • Water Quality • Recreation

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GOOD CONSERVATION PRACTICES MAKE

Good Neighbors ... and Good Business

If you live on the lake and care about clean water, you may owe a debt of gratitude to some people you don't even know: individuals who own property along the rivers, streams, and creeks upstream. It's an established fact: how people manage the land in the surrounding watershed has a direct impact on your reservoir's health. In future issues of *River Neighbors*, we'll be taking a closer look at some of the things these "good neighbors" are doing to help to improve watershed conditions. We begin by focusing on the contributions of Valley farmers.

In Northwest Alabama . . .

Jimmy Blythe is helping to ensure water quality benefits for downstream users—including folks on Wilson Reservoir—by implementing a whole slate of conservation practices on his cotton farm in the Big Nance Creek watershed. Blythe has been practicing conservation tillage (planting between what's left behind from last year's crop) for several years. He also has restored some wetlands in his fields, put in grassed filter borders, and left trees and shrubs around the part of his 4,500-acre farm that runs next to the creek.

Blythe says that restoring the streamside vegetation has resulted in a win/win situation: "I've been able to reduce soil loss,

improve water quality, and have seen a good return on my investment." He feels that's the key to getting other farmers on board: showing them that adopting conservation practices can be profitable for their operations. "Farmers are just naturally skeptical folks; we have to see something work before we'll try it."

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"You've got to show farmers that conservation practices can be profitable for their operations," says cotton farmer Jimmy Blythe.

On the Cutting Edge Down in “Cotton Country”

Big Nance Creek, located in a rural area that produces much of Alabama’s cotton, is one of only 12 watersheds in the nation designated as a “National Showcase Watershed” under the Clean Water Action Plan. Sites were selected to provide others with outstanding examples of success in restoring stream corridors and improving water quality.

For a look at the Big Nance Partnership and the people who made it happen, visit EPA’s website at www.epa.gov/owow/showcase.



Do You Know Your Watershed Address?

To find out, go to the “Know Your Watershed” website published by the Conservation Technology Information Center: www.ctic.purdue.edu/kyw.



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Blythe is encouraged about the potential for long-term success: “When all of us do what’s right for the land and water—no matter how far we are from the creek—conditions in the whole watershed will really start to improve.”

In West Tennessee . . .

Gerald Bomar is building a state-of-the-art agrichemical storage demonstration facility that will keep pesticides and fertilizers from contaminating Beaverdam Creek, which flows into the West Sandy embayment of Kentucky Reservoir. Bomar farms about 1,300 acres of row crops (mostly corn and soybeans) just outside of Paris, Tennessee.

Cost-share incentives will help with design and construction costs, but Bomar is investing \$15,000 of his own money in the project, which includes a water-tight secondary concrete containment for his liquid fertilizer and chemical tanks and a sloped concrete pad to contain spills which might result from loading and/or mixing chemicals. The building also will keep his pesticide concentrates under roof.

Bomar says he’s hopeful that other farmers in the area will tour his facility and decide to build something similar. “Most farmers are conservation-minded,” he explains. “Because of the way we make our living, we just naturally have a lot of



Gerald Bomar hopes the new agrichemical storage facility he’s building will encourage his neighbors to make a similar investment.

respect for the land and water.” And when it comes to his leisure time, he has an extra incentive to protect the water that leads to the West Sandy. “Since I’m a duck hunter, it’s a good feeling to know that I’m doing something that will help protect this significant waterfowl habitat.”

In Southwest Virginia . . .

Rodney Wagner is going to great lengths to see that by-products of his family-owned poultry operation don’t end up in Beaver Creek and eventually in Boone Reservoir. Located outside Abingdon, Green Valley Poultry Farm produces an amazing 4.2 million eggs each week. The farm’s eight poultry houses contain 800,000 chickens and generate over 1,000 gallons of high-pH wastewater a day. Though he’s not required to do so by law, Wagner sees that every drop is hauled off and processed at a wastewater treatment plant.

“By doing the right thing voluntarily, we can avoid additional regulation—which we all know comes at a cost.”

Day-to-day operations at Green Valley Farm also include other conservation practices, such as concrete confinements and waste pits with large fans to speed the drying of the litter. Wagner worked with the State of Virginia to develop nutrient management plans for the farmers that buy his chicken litter for fertilizer. These plans help to ensure that the litter is spread at appropriate times and rates to improve crop production efficiency and minimize environmental impacts.

Wagner is convinced that conservation practices can make good economic sense for farmers, as well as benefit the environment. “By doing the right thing voluntarily, we can avoid additional regulation—which we all know comes at a cost. By dedicating ourselves to being good stewards of the land, the agricultural community can have a tremendous impact on the long-term future of our natural resources.”

TVA Reservoir Levels¹

	August 1 Minimum Summer Levels		January 1 Flood Guide Levels	
	feet	meters	feet	meters
Tributary Reservoirs				
Blue Ridge	1682	512.7	1668	508.4
Boone	1382	421.2	1357	413.6
Chatuge	1923	586.1	1912	582.8
Cherokee	1060	323.1	1030	313.9
Douglas	990	301.8	940	286.5
Fontana	1693	516.0	1644	501.1
Hiwassee	1515	461.8	1465	446.5
Normandy	873	266.1	864	263.4
Norris	1010	307.9	985	300.2
Nottely	1770	539.5	1745	531.9
South Holston	1721	524.6	1702	518.8
Tims Ford	886	270.1	873	266.1
Watauga	1949	594.1	1940	591.3
Main-River Reservoirs				
Chickamauga	681.5	207.7	677	206.4
Fort Loudoun/Tellico	812	247.5	809	246.6
Guntersville	594	181.1	593	180.7
Kentucky	357.5	109.0	354	107.9
Nickajack	633	192.9	633	192.9
Pickwick	413	125.9	410	125.0
Watts Bar	740	225.6	737	224.6
Wheeler	555	169.2	552	168.3
Wilson	506.2	154.3	506.2	154.3

¹ Elevations above mean sea level.

Reservoir Operations Update

Fontana Drawdown—TVA will begin lowering Fontana Reservoir to elevation 1575—about 50 to 55 feet below normal—beginning August 1, 2000, for a dam safety inspection required every five years to meet federal guidelines. The inspection work will begin in mid- to late-November and should be completed by January 2001—in time for the reservoir to fill to normal levels by spring.

Watts Bar Lock Closure—Watts Bar Lock will be closed for inspection and maintenance from September 12 through September 29. There is no auxiliary lock available at Watts Bar to pass traffic.

Whitewater Recreation Releases—Water releases for whitewater recreation below Ocoee No. 2 Dam will be provided five days a week through August and on weekends through November 5. Recreational releases also are provided from Ocoee No. 3, Apalachia, Wilbur, and Tims Ford Dams and for the Bear Creek Floatway. Complete information on recreational release schedules is available on the web at lakeinfo.tva.gov or by calling TVA's toll-free river information line: 632-2264 in Knoxville, 751-2264 in Chattanooga, 386-2264 in Muscle Shoals, and 1-800-238-2264 from all other locations. If you are hearing impaired, call 1-800-438-2264.

Mosquito Fluctuations—Fluctuations in water levels to strand mosquito eggs and larvae on the shoreline will end in August at Chickamauga and in September at Pickwick, Wheeler, and Guntersville.

Dealing with the Dry Weather

The dry conditions that have plagued our region for the past two years show no signs of letting up. During the first five months of this year, Tennessee Valley rainfall was 4.5 inches below normal, and runoff (the amount of rain that ends up in reservoirs) was 5.6 inches below normal. As of May 30, total water in storage above Chattanooga was 300,000 acre-feet below the median for the last 28 years of record.

Despite the dry weather, however, only two reservoirs did not reach their targeted summer operating level on schedule. At press time, Cherokee Reservoir near Knoxville was 1.7 feet below the June 1 target level of 1060, and Nottely Reservoir near Blairsville was 1.6 feet below the target level of 1770.

“Except for minimum releases to protect downstream water quality, we held every drop of water in these reservoirs that we could,” explains Greg Lowe, Manager of River Scheduling at TVA. “But we simply didn’t get enough local rain to reach target levels on schedule. We’re still hoping to fill these reservoirs to at least their minimum summer levels and maintain those levels through July.”

The key, says Lowe, is operating TVA dams and reservoirs as an integrated system: “Our goal is to make the best use of the limited water available—in this case, conserving it in Cherokee and Nottely and releasing just enough from other reservoirs to maintain minimum flows for aquatic life and meet navigation requirements.”

Stewardship Council “Rolls Up Its Sleeves”

Not only have members of the Regional Resource Stewardship Council learned a lot about TVA in their first several meetings—they’ve learned that they’re in for a lot of work.

After deciding how the Council would operate, the group requested a variety of educational activities, including a half-day river tour. They’ve listened to input from dozens of stakeholders on a wide variety of resource-related topics, identified the issues they’ll tackle first, and formed subcommittees to address them. These subcommittees will focus on inte-



grated river management, public-lands management, infrastructure, and water quality. A legislative action working group will target issues impacting natural resources.

By the time the Council meets again, members are expected to have received in-depth briefings on reservoir operations, including an overview of the 1991 Lake Improvement Plan.

More detailed information on the Council (including transcripts and notices of meetings) is available at www.tva.gov/rsrc, or you may call TVA at 865-632-2333.

SAFETY TIPS FOR

Operating Your Personal Watercraft

Visit any TVA reservoir on a summer weekend, and you’ll see them everywhere. Personal watercrafts—Jet Skis, Wave Runners, Sea Doos, etc.—are the hottest trend in water recreation. According to U.S. Coast Guard estimates, over a million personal watercrafts will be taking to the nation’s waterways this year.

While operating a personal watercraft is a lot of fun, it’s also a serious responsibility. Statistics show that accidents involving personal watercrafts have grown in direct proportion to their popularity. Because they’re so small and maneuverable, it’s easy to forget that personal watercrafts are technically motorboats—and governed by all Coast Guard rules and regulations. By following the guidelines below, you can reduce your risk of accidents and help keep personal watercraft use safe and enjoyable.

- Wear a Coast Guard-approved life jacket at all times.
- Avoid wake-jumping and passing close to any other boats.



DAVID LUTTRELL

- Never use alcohol or other drugs before or during operation.
- Maintain a safe speed and keep your distance from swimming areas.
- Don’t tow skiers without an observer or side-mirrors.
- Make sure the person driving is of legal age and knows how to operate the craft.
- Avoid operating your craft too close to residential and congested areas.
- Obey “No Wake” signs.
- Observe all federal, state, and local boating laws.

For Better Fishing Call 1-800-ASK-FISH

All the latest boating and fishing information is now as close as your telephone. A new toll-free number, 1-800-ASK-FISH, offers regularly updated information to help callers from Tennessee and Mississippi get the latest fishing reports, locate public boat ramps or vessel pump-out stations, and



even purchase a fishing license or lake maps. Callers can also learn about state fishing regulations and other types of information that can contribute to a memorable angling experience.

The 1-800-ASK-FISH program is a cooperative effort between state resource management agencies, the American Sportfishing Association, and Bass Pro Shops.

“Lake Watch” Launched on Watts Bar

It sounds like an idea whose time has come. Building upon the “Neighborhood Watch” concept, a new program called “Lake Watch” has been formed to help keep river communities safer by reducing crime and accidents. With the support of the TVA Police, the Lake Watch concept was recently put into place on a trial basis on Watts Bar Reservoir. If it proves successful, there’s a good chance the program will be started on other TVA reservoirs.

Lake Watch is designed specifically to keep public property—TVA campgrounds, recreation areas, and waterways—safer, cleaner, and more enjoyable for everyone. Citizens involved in Lake Watch are trained in how to recognize and report suspicious activities to the TVA Police or, in the case of private property, to local law enforcement agencies. Volunteers will also have the opportunity to learn more about boating safety regulations, as well as clean boating practices.

Captain Nancy Martin of the TVA Police is excited about the program and its potential benefits: “We think Lake Watch is going to be a terrific way to pro-

tect the public places we all value and enjoy. But the success of the program will depend on the level of public interest it generates. If local residents, business owners, and other lake users get on board, we should be able to make a difference in crime and accident rates on TVA reservoirs.”

For more information on the Watts Bar Lake Watch program, call 423-334-1807. To learn more about the possibility of starting a Lake Watch program on your reservoir, call 865-632-4029.



Allison and Jade Robison helped TVA Police officers demonstrate the proper use of personal flotation devices at a recent open house to kick off the Lake Watch program on Watts Bar Reservoir.

NOW AVAILABLE

New Navigation Charts

The Tennessee Valley Authority and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers are pleased to announce the publication of the 2000 edition of the Tennessee River Navigation Charts. A “must-have” for anyone with a large cruiser or houseboat, this publication contains 121 detailed maps packed with information essential for safe boating. The maps cover the entire 652 miles of the Tennessee River and the lower portions of the Hiwassee, Clinch, Emory, and Little Tennessee Rivers. They show primary and secondary sailing lines; locations of buoys, navigation lights, and mile markers; marinas and barge terminals; bridges, powerline crossings, and telephone line crossings (including vertical clearances at normal pool stage); and latitude and longitude. Also marked are underground crossings, rock outcroppings, shallow areas, and danger areas above and below dams.

Navigation charts can be purchased at TVA’s Map Store in Chattanooga for \$12 or by mail for an additional \$3.50 shipping charge. To order, call 1-800-MAPS-TVA or write to the TVA Map Store, 1101 Market Street, Chattanooga, TN 37402-2801.

River Journey Continues

Last summer, Mimi Hughes dove into the Tennessee River where it starts north of Knoxville,

Tennessee and began a five-year quest to swim its entire 652-mile length. Over the



next 10 days, she covered 125 miles, ending the first leg of her journey at Watts Bar Dam.

Beginning July 31st, she’ll swim another 125-mile section—from Watts Bar to a spot about five miles over the Alabama state line on Guntersville Reservoir.

The mission of this 44-year-old mother of four: to generate interest among Valley residents in protecting the river for future generations. “It’s my hope that each individual will come to feel a sense of personal responsibility for the health of this magnificent river. We can all do something to help—whether it’s preventing soil erosion around creek banks, reducing the amount of lawn chemicals we use, or participating in a shoreline clean-up. For all the important benefits the river provides to us, that’s the very least we can do.”

TVA is sponsoring Hughes’ swim and will provide a support boat. For more information about her itinerary or to hear her speak, please call TVA’s Linda Harris at 423-954-3802.



JUST A MOUSE CLICK AWAY

New Recreation Guidebook

Making plans for recreation in, on, and around TVA reservoirs this summer? You'll find TVA's new recreation guidebook indispensable. *Tennessee River Country: A Glovebox Guide to TVA Places for Family Fun* offers 102 pages filled with maps, full-color photography, and detailed information on outdoor activities at 35 of TVA's reservoir recreation areas.

The guidebook can be purchased for \$10 from Barnes and Noble, B. Dalton, and Books-A-Million bookstores and can be ordered through the mail from TVA by calling 865-632-4220 in Knoxville or 423-751-7904 in Chattanooga.

If you have a new address or no longer want to receive this newsletter, please contact:

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New, Improved TVA Website

In a flurry of electronic housecleaning, TVA has streamlined and reorganized its website. You can check out the results at www.tva.gov.

The new site is more accessible and user-friendly. It features less than half the number of pages contained on the original site, making it easier for users to find topics of interest quickly.

Several new sections of the site should be of particular interest to *River Neighbors* readers. These include:

- A redesigned, easy-to-use River Information page featuring current water levels at TVA reservoirs, stream flows at locations across the Valley, and electronic versions of back issues of *River Neighbors*.
- A site designed specifically to allow Valley citizens to track the activities of TVA's Regional Resource Stewardship

Council. The site includes meeting notices and transcripts of past meetings, as well as biographies and e-mail contact information for Council members.

- Easily-accessed information on camping and recreation on TVA reservoirs, details on TVA's Shoreline Management Policy, and contact information for TVA Watershed Team members.

