



USACE Park Rangers

"Doc" Dolphus Bell and friend Ellen Roland fishing below the Dam.

Fishing with 'Dead Bob'

Good friends Doc and Ellen have been fishing together for about 14 years. The usually meet with other friends below Thurmond Dam every week. Ellen said the fishing sessions are good stress relief from her hospital job. Doc said with a laugh that the fishing was good for relieving the "stresses" of retirement. They also agree that fishing is a good way to make friends and meet friends.

Doc and Ellen related a story about their regular fishing group that included a fellow named Bob. After not seeing Bob at the regular fishing spots for a while, someone reported to them that Bob had died. The fishing group was saddened by the loss of their friend. But, you can imagine the surprise everyone experienced when "Dead Bob" showed up to resume the weekly fishing sessions. "He wasn't dead. He was only taking a break." Still very much alive, Bob is a regular fisherman. To this day, he is known to the fishermen below Thurmond Dam as "Dead Bob".

-By David Quebedeaux

USACE Park Rangers



"Doc" Bell with pride catch during his frequent fishing sessions with Ellen and "Dead Bob".

US Army Corps of Engineers Savannah District



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Lake Times

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



J. Strom Thurmond Dam and Lake Celebrates Golden Anniversary

by Mindy Anderson

Nearly 300 guests gathered at Thurmond Lake's Below Dam, S.C., park on April 14 to celebrate the 50th Year Anniversary of the J. Strom Thurmond Dam and Lake at Clarks Hill.

U. S. Army Corps of Engineers' Savannah District Commander Col. Roger A. Gerber spoke of the flood control, hydropower and recreation benefits that the J. Strom Thurmond Dam and Lake Project has provided throughout the last half-century.

"While the project has always included leaders from throughout the region, with support from Washington, it was the sweat and muscle of our district's workers that made the vision into a reality," Gerber said. "The spirit of the workers will continue here as long as the dam stands.

"Whenever someone turns on a light in the region, they owe a debt of thanks to the workers who installed the turbines. Whenever a family picnics, skis or fishes on the lake, they owe their day of relaxation to the workers who helped construct the lake. And those who live along the lower Savannah River should say 'thanks' to the workers whose toil controls the ravages of flooding."

"Authorized by Congress in 1944 and completed in 1954, Thurmond Lake provides a wide array of services and amenities to the southeast region," said Brig. Gen. (P) Randal R. Castro, commander of the South Atlantic Division, U. S. Army Corps of



Jonas Jordan

The Presentation of the Colors by the Installation Support Platoon Color Guard, Fort Gordon, Ga.

Engineers.

"This project is a resource we can all be proud of," Castro said. "At 72,000 acres, Thurmond Lake is the largest man-made reservoir east of the Mississippi River, and is a Mecca for boaters, hikers, and especially fishermen.

"Project lands also provide a paradise for hunters and wildlife enthusiasts, as the area has been enhanced and maintained conscientiously by the Corps to maximize wildlife resources throughout the life of the project," he said.

Castro said Ken Dial, operations manager at J. Strom Thurmond Dam and Lake, as well as others like him throughout the nation are unrecognized heroes.

"They must be sensitive to both human and environmental concerns, and achieve balance in project management which

serves the greatest good," Castro said. "This project is representative of the Army's and the Nation's long-standing commitment to civil works."

The J. Strom Thurmond Lake project encompasses roughly 140,000 acres of land and water, and took more than one million cubic yards of concrete in its construction, and cost \$79 million to build.

When it comes to its primary mission of flood control, Thurmond Dam has passed the test of time.

The Clarks Hill project has helped not only the people of South Carolina and Georgia, but other surrounding states as well, said Nancy Thurmond, wife of the late South Carolina Senator, J. Strom Thurmond, Sr., the longest serving member in the United States Senate.

The day's events kicked off with music from Fort Gordon's

U.S. Army Signal Corps Band led by Warrant Officer Scott MacDonald. Fort Gordon's Installation Support Platoon Color Guard performed the presentation of colors.

Vocalist Anita Purcell of the John S. Davidson Fine Arts School sang the National Anthem, just ahead of the Pledge of Allegiance led by Aaron Wahus, recreation chief ranger, J. Strom Thurmond Dam and Lake. Immediately following, Chaplain (Maj.) Mark Awdykowyz, Fort Gordon, Ga., offered the invocation. A lunch buffet and several decorated cakes - one like a castle, and another with a replica of the ceremony's anniversary logo -- was provided for everyone in attendance.

Dam Stopped the Floods!

--a Brief History in Photos

by Jim Cunningham

Few at the time realized that building the dam not only would stop the flooding; it would add so much to the quality of life in the Savannah River area. Few alive today can remember what the river was like before the dam was built.

In 1890 the District Engineer in the Savannah Office wrote in a survey report that building a series of dams could only solve the flood problem in Augusta. It took until 1927 for congress to authorize the Corps of Engineers to investigate such a proposal in the so-called "308 reports".

Two places were recommended as likely sites for dams with power plants, Clarks Hill and Hartwell. But it was not to be. More and more surveys were made until the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbour Dec. 7, 1941 stopped all action on civil works projects.

In 1945 Brig. Gen. R. F. Fowler invited six of the nation's best engineers to a meeting in Augusta at the Bon Air Hotel. These engineers met for three days, June 6, 7 and 8. In those three days they designed the dam that stopped the flooding!

It was August 1946 when work began on the dam. A contract was awarded in 1947 for diverting the river from its normal channel, so construction could begin. According to tour guides, Thurmond Dam was a trendsetter for design and electrical generation. Just the concrete alone was far ahead of its time in 1948. It was made with granite quarried from an area only a mile away from Clark Hill. It is the hardest concrete known today; and it will take another 50 years before it will arrive at its hardest state!



Construction of the J. Strom Thurmond Dam began in 1949. Early in construction, workers built giant forms for pouring concrete, pictured here along the bottom of the photo.

USACE Archives



The J. Strom Thurmond Dam began to take on its final shape in 1951. The lake behind the dam had already begun to fill.

USACE Archives



Today the J. Strom Thurmond Dam prevents flooding that had plagued Augusta for decades. In this rare and impressive occurrence, the flood gates release tons of water per minute during a test of their operation. This photo was taken in 1998.

Photo: Jonas Jordan

Photo: USACE Archives

Corps Answers Burning Questions

Where there's smoke, there's fire, and where there's fire, Corps Natural Resources staff may have dropped the match.

When weather conditions are suitable, don't be surprised to see smoke billowing from some of the project lands. The Natural Resources staff conducts most of the burning that occurs on project land; however, the Corps lands that are leased to the states for Wildlife Management Areas are burned periodically by the respective state agencies. The use of prescribed fire has been a forest and wildlife management tool in the southeast for many years. Even prior to European settlement, Native Americans made extensive use of prescribed fire to drive game for hunting and clear areas for farming. Lightning strike fires may have played a role in the ecology of the south-east.

Fire is considered a destructive force. We grew up under the influence of Smokey Bear and we have seen the news media coverage of wildfires in the western U.S. There is a huge difference in an uncontrolled wildfire and a prescribed fire. Fire becomes a tool when set predetermined goals for a burn take specific measures to achieve those goals. The goals of a prescribed fire are numerous and may change for each site.

Several common goals are:

- Reducing accumulated fuels which can result in a wildfire,
- Preparing a site for planting,
- Reducing underbrush to improve aesthetics,
- Reducing competing vegetation to improve growth of the pine stand. Prescribed fires have even been shown to reduce tick populations. One of the most common goals for prescribed fire is wildlife habitat management.

Three techniques of control burns help achieve habitat management goals:

- Manipulate the timing or season of the burn,
- Alter the intensity of the fire,
- Vary the frequency of burning.

For example, winter and early spring burns (January through March) generally result in increases in herbaceous plants such as legumes, which are valuable wildlife foods. Later spring and summer burns (April through June) typically result in an increase in grass coverage. When properly applied, fire can improve wildlife habitat in other ways. Fire "opens" up the area to more sunlight, which increases plant growth and seed production near the forest floor. On one site in the Georgia piedmont, seed production of desirable

control of undesirable hardwood brush. Although there can be some direct impacts to nesting birds, birds will re-nest and the habitat improvements are well worth the trade-off. Conservation organizations such as the Wildlife Society, the Nature Conservancy, Quail Unlimited, and the National Wild Turkey Federation are strong advocates for prescribed burning and even applying "growing season" burns in specific situations when needed to improve habitat.

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Natural Resources staff only applies fire under specific weather conditions with an emphasis on safety. To ensure that the fire is contained within a designated area, fire-breaks (roads and streams) are evaluated and if necessary, additional breaks are plowed. Relative humidity, temperature, wind speed and direction are evaluated prior to each burn.



USACE Archives

Pictured here is a typical controlled burn to reduce underbrush at J. Strom Thurmond Dam and improve growth of the pine stand.

wildlife foods increased four-fold following a prescribed burn. Fire not only results in an increase in available wildlife food, but also can improve the structure of a habitat. For example, birds that nest on the ground such as turkey and quail need the additional plant growth close to the ground to provide nesting cover. Wait a minute! Ground-nesting birds and fire sounds like a bad combination.

What about the direct effects of fire on wildlife? First, wildlife species will move to adjacent areas during a fire. Prescribed fires in the southeast move relatively slowly depending on the wind speed and fuel load, which provides plenty of time for wildlife to move from the area. Fire is typically applied from January to March prior to the nesting season. If the underbrush is dense, burning may be needed later in the season from April to June. These "growing season" burns provide the best

consideration for any burn. In addition to wind speed and direction, it is important to assess atmospheric conditions affecting smoke dispersal prior to each burn. When all these factors are considered there may only be 20 to 30 suitable burning days between January and June. Driving in an area during or immediately after a burn requires extra caution and recently burned areas may have a "scorched" appearance. A prescribed burn requires careful planning and is an important benefit of this valuable management tool.

-By Jeff Brooks



Hunter Sam Richardson holds the trophy buck 8 point he bagged during the special two-day firearms hunt.

Special Two-Day Firearms Hunt Harvests 18 Deer

For the first time in thirty years, a special two-day firearms hunt was conducted in addition to the traditional archery and muzzleloader hunts. The December 2003 hunt was limited to 50 participants per day selected by random drawing. The response to this opportunity was overwhelming. Over 250 hunters were entered in the drawing with 100 individuals being given the chance to participate.

Four hunts were held: two archery only hunts, one muzzleloader and/or archery hunt and the special firearms hunt. In all, a reported 461 deer were seen, 385 hunters participated and 18 deer harvested. Overall, Friday hunts seemed to be more popular and more fruitful with 11 of the 18 deer being taken.

Bussey Point Management Area is a 2,545-acre multiple use area located on the Georgia side of Thurmond Lake. Recreational opportunities, such as trails and a hike-in picnic and camping area, are available. In most of the area, natural succession will be allowed to continue with existing wildlife management activities. The area is off limits to firearms and hunting except during managed primitive weapon hunts that are conducted to maintain the deer population within the carrying capacity and to improve the quality of the deer herd.

-By Lori Brewster