Winter 2012

Lake Times

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

Corps enters into Cooperative Management Lease at Thurmond Lake

By Christina Westerberg
Park Ranger

On June 7, 2012, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Savannah District embarked on a new and exciting journey in recreation management. The Corps entered into a cooperative agreement with a non-profit organization, Outdoor Recreation & Outreach, Inc. (OR&O), to provide recreation and educational opportunities on and around Thurmond Lake.

The first joint project of this partnership is a five year lease, executed on July 25, 2012, allowing the two partners to cooperatively operate and maintain five campgrounds on the lake.

The five campgrounds – Modoc, Petersburg, Ridge Road, Winfield and Raysville – are very popular camping destinations among lake visitors, and Corps staff are working closely with OR&O to ensure a smooth and seamless transition.

The campgrounds will continue operating as Corps parks, but with shared responsibilities between the organizations. OR&O provides park attendant services, fee collection, cleaning services, mowing and grounds maintenance, trash services, interpretative programs and some utilities. The Corps continues to provide all other services, including Visitor Assistance through park ranger patrols and law enforcement contracts, and some facility maintenance and repairs. The resulting cost savings to the Corps is estimated at $300,000 to $400,000 annually.

"Park visitors should see very little difference in the way our parks are operated or the fees charged," said Thurmond Operations Project Manager Scott Hyatt. "The greatest benefit of this new agreement is that all parks will remain open, service levels will remain constant, and proceeds from these campgrounds can now be reinvested in those parks."

October 1, 2012 was the start of the new partnership between the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and Outdoor Recreation & Outreach, Inc. From left: Michele Wilson, OR&O executive director; Clay Turner, operations manager; David Hatfield, USACE park ranger; Scott Hyatt USACE operations project manager, and Aaron Wahus, USACE park operations manager.

Fees will be used for daily operation, maintenance and upkeep, as well as enhancement projects at the campgrounds.

"We are very excited to have formed this new partnership with the Corps," said OR&O Executive Director Michelle Wilson. "The Corps and OR&O have a common vision for the long-term sustainability of these parks."

The cooperative management lease is a fairly new concept that is being used at a handful of Corps projects across the country, in accordance with Corps policies and regulations. The lease with OR&O is the first of its kind in the Savannah District. With continuously stagnant or declining recreation budgets, this program allows the Corps to keep parks open to the public that may otherwise have to be closed.

There are many other benefits to the new partnership between the Corps and OR&O. The partner has the ability to advertise these campgrounds through a variety of marketing strategies, thus increasing visitation and user fees. They will also be able to offer additional services and amenities that the Corps does not currently provide, including firewood, ice and other sundries. Through the

Continued on next page

Lake Times
U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Savannah District, J. Strom Thurmond Dam and Lake

Lake Times is an authorized newsletter of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Savannah District, J. Strom Thurmond Dam and Lake Project Office. It is published in accordance with provisions of Army Regulation 360-1, under supervision of the Corporate Communications Office and the Operations Division. The newsletter aims to communicate key projects, events and safety messages to the Thurmond Lake community and surrounding stakeholders.

Contact:
J. Strom Thurmond Dam and Lake Project Office
U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
Savannah District
510 Clarks Hill Highway
Clarks Hill, SC 29821
Toll Free: 1-800-533-3478
OR 864-333-1100

USACE Savannah District
Corporate Communications Office
912-652-5279
CESAS-CCO@usace.army.mil

Contributors:
Jill Davis
Blake Goforth
Sandra Hudson
Aaron Murphy
David Quebedeaux
Tracy Robillard
Jay Weidman
Chrissy Westerberg

Corps partners with OR&O

(Continued from front page)

partnership, OR&O can provide interpretive and outreach programs complimentary to those offered by the Corps. As a non-profit organization, they can fundraise and apply for grants, and they have the ability to partner with the Corps on lake-wide initiatives.

"Declining federal recreation budgets in recent years require an innovative approach to operating our nation's parks," Hyatt said. "By collaborating with partners like OR&O, we can keep parks open and continue to offer quality recreation opportunities for millions of visitors every year."

Campsite reservations for Corps parks, including those that are cooperatively managed, will continue to be available through the National Recreation Reservation Service (NRRS) by calling 1-877-444-6777 or going online to www.recreation.gov. The Outdoor Recreation & Outreach, Inc (OR&O) website is www.lakethurmondcampgrounds.com

BoatOnCourse.com

Take a FREE online boating course at BoatOnCourse.com
Brought to you by the National Safe Boating Council

The goal of BoatOnCourse.com is to bring awareness to six areas of navigation rules: overtaking a vessel, vessels crossing paths, vessels meeting head-on, the responsibility between vessels, safe speed, and maintaining a proper lookout.

BoatOnCourse.com is hosted by Tina with Tim, the boating safety guides. Together, they cover the navigation rules and compare them to the rules of the road—something that everyone is familiar with. They use different scenarios, whether it is driving in a car or using real boats, to show the actual implementation of the navigation rules.

Marking the Line

By Jill Davis
Park Ranger

Cooler weather has arrived. The leaves have changed color and dropped. The air is crisp and dry, and you can hear the occasional early morning crack of a hunter taking his shot. The winter recreation season is quickly approaching!

The fallen leaves have opened forested areas to more light and visibility. This is the best time to clear and re-mark the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers boundary line around Thurmond Lake. Bright orange is easy to spot in the forest—good for hunter safety as well as for making boundary line "witness" trees more visible and easy to identify.

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers will continue to re-mark the government boundary line during this time of year. Crews will be working in Columbia, Lincoln and McDuffie counties this season, beginning in Rousseau Creek and ending in the area off of Highway 47 adjacent to the Price-Legg (Little River) Bridge. The plan is to remark more than 60 miles of boundary line before spring closes the view.

The crew will scrape fading paint from the old "witness" trees and apply fresh paint to re-mark the vicinity of boundary line. If the boundary survey pins are not visible, workers will dig and expose them. The pins will be identified with flagging tape. Trees and brush will be cut back to clear a path to maintain a clear line of sight along the boundary corridor where possible.

The orange paint used to mark the boundary line on "witness" trees is normally a bright orange, four-inch band around half of each tree. To make the boundary line less obtrusive in adjacent subdivisions, the "witness" tree blaze width is reduced to two inches painted on one quarter of the tree. It is important to note that the marked trees do not delineate the exact boundary; they "witness" the approximate boundary line. The exact line can only be located by surveying the monuments and in-ground pins. Painted trees should never be used to determine the exact boundary line, but serve as a guide.

When buying property or planning to build on your land adjacent to public property, a professional survey is strongly recommended and a good investment. Any encroachment found across the line onto public land, however unintentional or minor, must be removed.

Adjacent property owners may be requested to retrieve any personal property items which may have been left on public land adjacent to their homes as the boundary line crew makes its way through the area. Please keep in mind that the crew may be in your area, so please make sure pets are not unattended on public land, especially while workers are present. If you have concerns about the work adjacent to your property, call the Thurmond Lake office at 1-800-533-3478.

Why do leaves change color in the fall?

By Blake Goforth
Natural Resources Specialist

Every autumn, dogwood, maple, oaks and other deciduous trees transform into colorful hues of red, orange, yellow and brown. Before long, their leaves fall and again become part of another cycle that feeds the soil. What causes this yearly cycle, and what determines which color the leaves turn?

During spring and summer, leaves actively produce foods necessary for plant growth. This food-making process takes place in the numerous cells within the leaf. Within these cells are Chloroplasts which contain the chlorophyll pigments that are responsible for the green color of plants. The leaves also contain lesser amounts of other pigments, primarily xanthophylls (yellows) and carotenoids (yellows, oranges, and reds).

Most of the year, these other pigments are masked by the greater amounts of chlorophyll present in the leaves. But in fall, when changes in temperature and the period of daylight occur, the leaves stop their food-producing activity. Soon the chlorophyll begins to break down, the green color disappears, and the yellows, oranges and reds slowly begin to emerge, giving the leaves their fall splendor.

The intensity of color is determined by the plant's response to complex gradients of temperature and moisture. Fall weather conditions favoring formation of brilliant autumn color are warm, sunny days followed by cool nights with temperatures below 50 degrees Fahrenheit. Sugar production increases during the daytime, but cool nights prevent movement of sugar from the leaves.

From the sugars trapped in leaves, the pigment called anthocyanin is formed. When fall weather is consistently cloudy or rainy, and the nights warm, the leaves usually have less intense coloration. The smaller amounts of sugar made during periods of less sunlight moves out of the leaves during the warm nights, reducing the conversion of excel sugars into pigments.

Before the leaves gracefully spin from their leafstalk, a special layer of cells develops and gradually severs the tissues that support the leaf. A small leaf scar is the only evidence that leaves once adorned these deciduous plants.

Recommendation: Suggested moderate rated hike on Bartram Trail starting near Petersburg Campground (Hwy 221) and traveling 9 miles to Wildwood County Park. During hunting season, please wear bright orange on all trails.

Take part in Environmental Stewardship

By Aaron Murphy
Natural Resources Specialist

Mother Teresa once said, "We ourselves feel that what we are doing is just a drop in the ocean. But the ocean would be less cause of that missing drop." We as stewards of the environment often times believe simply picking up a piece of trash or fixing that leaky water faucet is merely just a drop in the bucket; but that's not true.

One may ask, "What does environmental stewardship mean and what does it entail?" Environmental stewardship is t he act of taking accountability for keeping the environment free of trash and other pollutants that may harm natural resources and deplete the habitat of organisms, while also conserving nonrenewable resources for future generations. Whether it be picking up trash along the shoreline or plugging that leak in the fuel line of your boat, you are taking part in stewardship of the environment.

The concept of environmental stewardship is a fairly new term that was brought about in 2005 by the Environmental Protection Agency to promote a means to a more sustainable future.

Thurmond Lake has made leaps and bounds in the past 10 years to improve its stewardship practices and is on track to be a premier model of environmental stewardship for years to come.

Billy Clayton, the director of water utilities for Columbia County, Ga., once told the Augusta Chronicle in 2009 of Thurmond Lake, "believe it or not, it's almost too clean, if there is such a thing".

There have been many local, state, and federal laws put into place to achieve this goal. Just one example is that in 1993, the state of Georgia enacted a set of fines and possible jail time for any individual or company caught dumping illegally.

One would like to believe that the idea of keeping the environment clean has always been at the top of everyone's priority list, but this has not always been the case. In the late '60s and through the '70s, hundreds of tons of trash were placed in gullies and ravines around the lake. In those years, it was considered a common practice and was not directly frowned upon.

Still to this day, you can look in many ditches around the lake and find old cars and home appliances. In the last few years, the Corps of Engineers has taken an active role in removing waste and restoring these areas to their previous condition. Sometimes clearing debris from Corps property is as simple as putting it into the back of a pick-up truck and hauling it off; but often times it is costly to the tax payer due to harmful chemicals or construction debris that require special clean-up procedures.

During an area inspection of Ridge Road West Management Area, a large pile of dumped floor tile was found at the entrance kiosk. The tile contained asbestos and required specific removal instructions as stated by OSHA and the EPA. Asbestos was once used in many building materials and paint due to its ability to resist heat and corrosion. As we all know today, asbestos is harmful to the lungs and can potentially cause cancer.

The Corps of Engineers has guidelines that must be followed to remove asbestos that are often times very expensive to the tax payer. The tile covered an area approximately four cubic yards in size and cost the taxpayer $1,200 for the safe and legal removal, plus an extra $100 in analysis fees. OSHA required the team to wear special suits and respirator masks during the removal. All of these precautions may seem extreme, but even brief exposure to these materials can cause health problems in the future.

It is everyone's responsibility as environmental stewards to prevent situations such as the dump at Ridge Road West Management Area. When you see something like trash being dumped on public lands or activities that destroy the current habitat, it is imperative that you report it to your local sheriffs department or to a Corps ranger. Do your best to get a license plate number and a description of the individual to aid the Corps in determining the perpetrator.

Today, it was as simple as cleaning up trash from an access road on public property, but what will tomorrow hold? Will it be a medical waste dump in a ravine somewhere, or an overturned hazardous waste container slowly leaking material towards the shoreline of the lake? These examples may be a little extreme, but they could become problems of the future. It is our duty as environmental stewards to prevent things like this from happening.

The Corps of Engineers has made great progress in ensuring our public and even private lands are in line with environmental preservation practices. However, the government can only do so much. It is now our responsibility as stewards to go the extra mile and ensure the integrity of our environment. To put it simply, it may seem like a drop into Thurmond, Lake, but the lake would be less without that one drop.

A contracted crew cleans up a large pile of industrial tile flooring that was illegially dumped at the entrance to Ridge Road Management Area in Columbia County, Ga.

Old Dogs & Salt Dogs

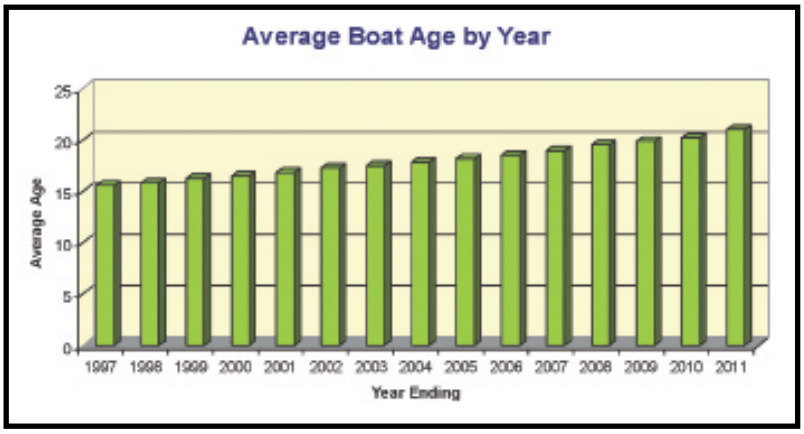
By Jay Weidman
Park Ranger

Like old cars, old boats have that intangible "something" new vessels lack. The retro style, nostalgia, or in today's economy, even necessity, keep them afloat from one owner to the next. Boating industry data shows on average, the age of today's watercraft extends five or more years past the 15-year life cycle of those sampled in 1997. With an expectancy of 20-plus years, many boats constructed during the height of small boat sales—from the late 80's through the 90's—remain in service today.

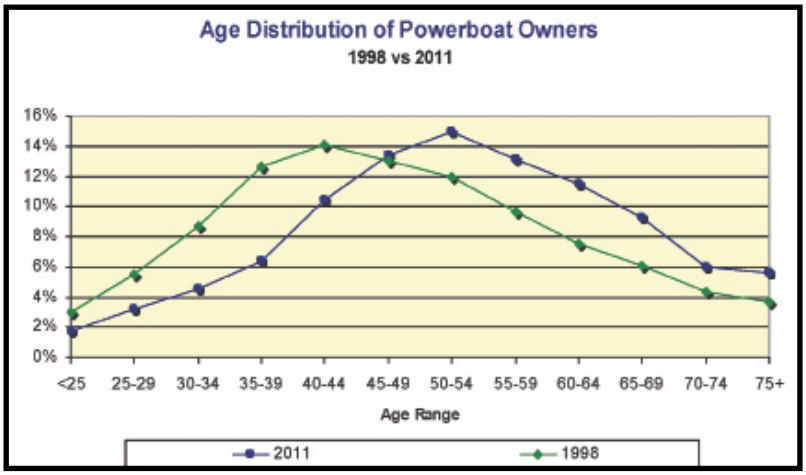
For whatever reason, the avid, pleasure craft enthusiast will tell you, any boat is better than no boat. However, owners be warned. Just like maintenance-intensive, vintage cars, older boats require more "Tender Loving Care." It's important to remember the little items required to keep those classic specimens in tip top shape, especially that all-important preventive maintenance. Today, boats aren't the only ones racking up extra mileage, so are their skippers.

Time marches on for operators once averaging three decades to pilots far more likely to be in their 50's or 60's. Like the vessels they love, older boat owners could benefit from a little TLC as well. The South Carolina Department of Natural Resources www.dnr.sc.gov , Georgia Department of Natural Resources www.gadnr.org , U.S.Coast Guard Auxiliary www.cgaux.org , Power Squadron www.usps,org , and similar agencies provide great resources to keep skills sharp.

These agencies recommend that boaters of all ages spend regular time on the water, seek out refreshers on small boat handling, seamanship, or any related courses which increase skills and safety on the water. They're certain to teach those "Old Salts" and the ones in training, some tried and true tips destined to lengthen everyone's time on the water.



Boats have gotten older. Many of the boats built during the boom are still in use. In 1997, the average boat was 15 years old. Today, the average boat is more than 20 years old, and getting older. Source: Info-Link Technologies, Inc.



Today there are fewer boat owners in their 30's and more in their 50's and 60's. Source: Info-Link Technologies, Inc.

Did you know you can receive the Lake Times via e-mail? To subscribe, send an e-mail to **CESAS-OP-T@usace.army.mil** with "Lake Times e-mail list" in the subject line. Be sure to include your mailing address so that we can remove you from our mailing list. Thanks for helping the Lake Times go green!

To stop receiving the Lake Times, please e-mail **CESAS-OP-T@usace.army.mil** with "unsubsribe" in the subject heading. Be sure to include your name and mailing address in the body of the e-mail.

Also, the Corps of Engineers has an e-newsletter called "Balancing the Basin" that provides updates on water management, drought, recreation and other Corps' activities affecting all three reservoirs on the Savannah River Basin--Hartwell, Richard B. Russell and J. Strom Thurmond. To subscribe, send an e-mail to: **CESAS-CCO@usace.army.mil** with "Subscribe to Balancing the Basin" in the subject line.

Questions for the Rangers

Question: I just moved to the Thurmond Lake area near Appling, Ga. and I'm looking for a ramp to launch my 30-foot vessel. Do you have any suggestions?

Answer: Good news! Launching a 30-foot vessel in Thurmond Lake is possible. All U.S. Army Corps of Engineers boat ramps vary in location, width, and depth and require differing levels of water for a safe and successful launch.

I recommend you try the site located off Hwy. 221 in Lake Springs Park, Ga. which has three ramps with concrete extending to 306.7 ft-msl. With careful navigation, we've had some large boats launched there even when the lake was at much lower levels. To help you decide the best place for your lake activities, find a full listing of Thurmond Lake boat ramp elevations at **http://www.sas.usace.army.mil/lakes/thurmond/rampelev.html**

We also suggest you check the lake level the day you intend to launch. Lake levels are posted daily at **http://water.sas.usace.army.mil/home/indexDU.htm**

Do you have a question for the rangers? E-mail your question to **CESAS-OP-T@usace.army.mil**

National Public Lands Day

Pictured back row, from left: Savannah District Deputy Commander Lt. Col. Thomas Woodie, Park Ranger David Quebedeaux, District Commander Col. Jeff Hall, Chief of Operations Division Peggy O'Bryan, and (front row) Rory Rihel and Caralynn Freville are all smiles for National Public Lands Day at Thurmond Lake, Sept. 29, 2012. An estimated 65 volunteers came out this year to trim trees, pick up trash, and help with other clean-up activities around the lake. National Public Lands Day is the nation's largest single-day volunteer event for public lands. USACE photos by Scott Hyatt.

Resource Manager
J. Strom Thurmond Resource Office
510 Clarks Hill Highway
Clarks Hill, S.C. 29821

Address Service Requested

US Army Corps of Engineers®