

# HOBOS *work toward common goal*

This I know about Lake Martin. Every person who has bought or built on the lake - from the first cabin in 1928 until today - hopes “the lake will stay just like it is now.”

Reality: it is changing every day. So fast that a group of lake residents came together last year with the desire to make sure all these changes are positive, to protect and enhance what we’ve got with specific goals. Thus the HOBOS (Lake Martin Homeowners and Boat Owners Association) was born.

In fact, several factors lined up about the same time to push this organization into being. The first and most obvious was that our water disappeared. Another concern arose, to keep this same water pure and clean. Shoreline development and the economy of the lake area were other factors. The HOBOS’ founders realized there was no one organization to band together the residents and owners of 7,840 properties on the lake.

Initially five people exchanged ideas, then called a meeting attended by 32 people. As word spread this number jumped to 1700 members and soon will be over 2,000. “This is good because the critical thing for us,” said Jesse Cunningham, Lake Martin resident and president of the HOBOS, “is to have the membership as large as possible. When we go to politicians or corporations or government agencies and say we represent 2000 plus people, they will pay attention.”

Of the present membership, 40 percent are full time residents, 60 percent part-time. The entire lake is represented: from Dadeville south comes 48.6 percent of the members, from Alexander City west, 51.4 percent.

The HOBOS’ first foray into an issue was a resounding success. “If we could get the winter level raised five feet above the current established level, many of the drought problems we are confronted with today could have been averted. We solicited and received Governor Riley’s support in this. Alabama Power has now agreed to raise the winter lake level beginning this year.” He added, “The lake level was raised



HOBO volunteers work with Alabama Power Company to place recycled Christmas trees in designated areas around the lake to create fish habitats.

because of a temporary variance approved by FERC (Federal Energy Regulatory Commission). The HOBOS hope to see this temporary variance used until relicensing is finalized in 2013.”

Okay, now that we’ve got more water - assuming rain - keeping it pure and clean is another concern of the HOBOS. The membership was a positive influence on the City of Dadeville’s recently announced plan to upgrade the city’s

Story by Joanne Cunningham Walker ♦ Photo by Gwen Bishop

wastewater treatment plant. (The town's wastewater is released into a tributary of Sandy Creek, which empties into Lake Martin.) That is a big step toward maintaining Lake Martin's reputation as 'the cleanest lake in Alabama.'

Plans are now underway to involve the organization in service to the lake. "In February we will be building fish habitats with recycled Christmas trees using at least 200 trees," Cunningham explained. Now listen up all you fishing lovers: "We will publish the locations of these habitats on our web site."

The HOBOS sponsored its first safe boating course, a series launched in February. This not only adds to our quality of boating life but, with Alabama's boating laws (some of the strictest in the country, I am glad to say) this information leading to a boating license is essential.

"We know that this 40,000 acre lake is about more than recreation—it's about a lot of businesses that depend on the lake," the president pointed out. (Dare I recall the old "It's the economy, St..."? Well, you get the point.) Several of the organizations' board members also own businesses in the area and others were encouraged to join in a recent letter: *Whether you are a physician, restaurant owner, insurance agent, realtor, or retail business owner you are affected by what happens to Lake Martin and its 7800 property owners.* "We want to demonstrate the impact of the lake on the area economy."

Another matter on the HOBOS' horizon: shoreline development. "We want to insure that local authorities put into place shoreline development rules that are in the best interest of all stakeholders," Cunningham explained.

So how does this group settle on goals? "There is a space on the membership application that asks for members' concerns. That is where our goals are derived."

To involve people lake-wide, the HOBOS is installing a database "that will enable us to have a mailing address of every lake front property owner. With this database we will be able to conduct Internet surveys of members to be sure the goals of the organization reflect the desires of the entire membership." The organization has divided the lake into twelve areas with a coordinator for each one to enable all members to have individual and personal communication.

You want to know more? Two ways: Log onto [www.LakeMartin.org](http://www.LakeMartin.org), a website loaded with information. Attend the annual meeting, March 29, Central Alabama Community College, Alexander City - time and details on the website.

Cunningham concludes, "The HOBOS plan to protect water levels and water quality of the lake by active advocacy for the preservation of the lake and the economic stability of its member businesses. Membership is open to anyone who wants to protect Lake Martin and preserve it for future generations." I'd say that just about covers anybody reading this, wouldn't you?

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