

WATeR: To protect the water quality of our lake

Marilyn Hawkey – published 2/5/20 in The Connection

Homeowners around Tellico Lake have reported to WATeR, an acronym for the **W**atershed **A**ssociation of the **T**ellico **R**eservoir, that strange plants are beginning to grow in the lake and that the lake's water lacks clarity. WATeR is sampling and analyzing lake water to define environmental concerns. The following is the first in a series of articles WATeR will share in 2020 about the status of the lake's water quality, and any problems and solutions needed to maintain the lakes' clarity and cleanliness.

WATeR's focus, per its mission statement is: "...on issues, policies, and practices that promote clean water and natural habitat so that humans can live, work, and play in harmony with native plants and animals as well as with each other. Public education and demonstration projects are emphasized to make people aware of environmentally friendly practices that affect the watershed." WATeR's work is recognized by those who live on or use the lake and by State and Federal agencies.

WATeR, an all-volunteer organization, monitors water quality throughout the watershed and establishes best practice methods to keep lake and creek water healthy. WATeR was created in 2000 as a spinoff of Tellico Village residents' efforts to prevent a rock quarry not far from the Mialaquo side of the Village. At that time, WATeR was and continues to be led by a group of area residents with technical backgrounds.

Examples of WATeR's educational and action programs include: 1) the spring clean-up of trash dumped throughout the watershed; 2) maintenance of the East Lakeshore Trails; 3) development of environmentally friendly practices including lakeshore native plant buffer zones to decrease the flow of nitrogen and phosphorus into the lake; 4) study of the Baker Creek, Fork Creek and Bat Creek watersheds to support better farming practices to decrease cattle manure, excess fertilizer and sediment pollution into streams and subsequently the lake; and 5) monitor and assure that industrial and municipal discharges into the creeks and lake comply with environmental standards.

Go to the WATeR website at: www.tellicowater.org for more detailed information. If you would like to help WATeR with its programs, send an email to ihm23@aol.com.