

The many roles of one body of water.

Marilyn Hawkey – published 2/19/20 in The Connection

Tellico Lake began as and still is the Little Tennessee River. It begins in northern Georgia and flows into the Unicoi Mountains near the Cherokee County/Graham County line in North Carolina's Nantahala National Forest. It ends where it joins the Tennessee River at Tellico Dam in Lenoir City.

The lake is also the reservoir for Tellico Dam. It was the last dam completed by TVA in 1979. TVA manages the dam, raises and lowers the lake's water levels, and does some testing and water sampling. The Tennessee Department of Environment & Conservation (TDEC) is responsible to ensure that the quality of water in the lake, the fish, and the sources of pollution flowing into the lake meet acceptable standards but has limited resources and little enforcement.

Tellico Lake is part of a watershed. A watershed is a land area that channels rainfall and snowmelt to creeks, streams and rivers. The Tellico Watershed are the hills and valleys surrounding the 33 miles of Tellico Lake from Chilhowee Dam to Tellico Dam in Lenoir City.

In 1985, at a competitive auction, Cooper Communities, Inc. (CCI) bought TVA's land known as Tellico Village in Loudon County. In 1996, CCI bought Kahite in Monroe County. TVA owns the land from the water's edge to the 820 line which is the elevation point where TVA land changes to the lake front home owner's property. TVA governs the removal of plants and vegetation on its lake front shoreline and property. Many lake front home owners in Tellico Village and other watershed neighborhoods have put grass, walls and walkways on their property and extended it beyond the 820 line and onto TVA's land to the shoreline. Lately, lake front residents have reported to **WATeR** that along the shoreline, lake water is losing clarity, that strange plants are beginning to grow and that at times, the water is "greening" and can be slimy.

TVA does not manage Tellico Lake's water quality or sources of pollution flowing into the lake. TDEC's enforcement of rules and regulations is limited. Therefore, a group of area residents with expertise in water quality and wastewater treatment founded **WATeR** in 2000 to actively preserve the quality of water in the lake. **WATeR** stands for **W**atershed **A**ssociation of **T**ellico **R**eservoir. Go to its web site: www.Tellicowater.org to read more in-depth articles on these and other topics related to **WATeR** and it's work to preserve the water quality of the lake.