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Intro article Origin of WATeR

This is the first of a series of articles on Watershed Association of the Tellico Reservoir (WATeR). The need for an association that included the entire watershed of Tellico Lake was first identified and suggested by Bill Lenoir and Brian Baxter in 2000. They were instrumental in founding the Fork Creek Association to oppose a plan by Vulcan Materials to build a rock quarry in their community.

In March 2000, Bill and Brian arranged a meeting with Bill and Marjorie Waldrop to propose the founding of a watershed association with an emphasis on educating and informing the public concerning practices that will protect the lake and surrounding areas. They emphasized the need for formalizing an organization dedicated to preserving and improving environmental conditions along Tellico Lake.

After some consideration, Bill Waldrop accepted the challenge along with the support of Bill and Brian. A series of events including formulating a proposal for a Lower Tellico Watershed Environmental Protection Association, while promoting cooperation between residents of all neighbors in the region. A committee including members of Tellico Village, Fork Creek, Foothills Pointe, Glendale, and Rarity Bay was formed.

In addition to the Tellico Village POA, both TVA and TDEC were very supportive. They recognized that having an organized group of citizens would help them in meeting their environmental goals and provide them with valuable input from the public.

The committee also debated and addressed many administrative and legal issues for the new organization, to be named the Watershed Association of the Tellico Reservoir. An elected Board of Directors would govern WATeR. Programs and projects were to be administered through a committee structure with approval by the Board.

In May 2001, one of the first activities sponsored by WATeR was a public meeting to help understand the current state of the environment in the watershed to help membership define where they could best contribute.

This highly publicized meeting introduced WATeR to the community and provided the groundwork for forming committees that soon produced such projects as the annual shoreline cleanup and building the East Lakeshore Hiking Trail.

Continuing to focus on lake water quality, fish quality, cattle access, NDPEs permits in the watershed, industry and treatment plants into the watershed, stormwater and residential discharges, and other issues, in 2020, WATeR continues to be a well-established organization and is recognized throughout the community and by the State and Federal agencies.

Additional information can be found on the organization website: www.tellicowater.org