

One Lake Pearl River Project Jackson Audubon Resolution

This resolution was passed by a unanimous vote on March 8, 2018 by the Board of Directors of the Jackson Audubon Society.

Dr. Christopher King, President

Mary Stripling, Vice President

Joyce Ellis, Secretary

Damie Brenholtz, Treasurer

Dr. David King

Mary Louise Stevens

Dr. Ethel Rose

Larcie Burnett

PROPOSED ONE LAKE PROJECT

OVERVIEW,

RESOLUTION

&

MEMORANDUM OF SUPPORT FOR THE RESOLUTION

OVERVIEW

The **proposed One Lake Project** is the brain child of developer John McGowan and is presented as a flood control project but there is concern that the proposed project will actually increase flooding in certain areas. The Project proposes a flood control plan that would create a lake between Lakeland Drive and the City of Richland and speculates that a certain percentage of all flooding would be eliminated by dredging, deepening, and clearing for the project. Islands would be created from spoil dredged to form the lake. Additionally, several hundred acres of land previously subject to flooding would become available for development.

Despite McGowan's assertions to the contrary, Ross Barnett Reservoir was not constructed as a flood control reservoir. In the engineering documents for the reservoir, it is clearly stated that the lake was built for recreation and as a water supply source. McGowan cites the enabling legislation for the Pearl River Water Supply District as evidence that the reservoir was built as a flood control lake. The statute he cites, however, only says that the PRWSD has the authority to construct flood control reservoirs in general. It does not in any way refer to Ross Barnett Reservoir.

References:

URS. 2000. Independent Evaluation: Two Lakes Flood Control Plan. Prepared by URS for the U. S. Army Corps of Engineers, Vicksburg District. URS, Metairie, Louisiana and Bethesda, MD

RESOLUTION

REGARDING CONCERNS OF THE “ONE LAKE” PROJECT

1. WHEREAS the One Lake Project is a development project masquerading as a flood control project, and
2. WHEREAS Ross Barnett Reservoir was constructed to provide recreation and a water supply for Jackson and surrounding areas, and was never intended to be a flood-control reservoir, and
3. WHEREAS the One Lake Project, in order to provide flood control benefits to Jackson and surrounding areas, requires that Ross Barnett Reservoir serve primarily as a flood control reservoir, and
4. WHEREAS converting Ross Barnett Reservoir to a flood control reservoir was considered and rejected after both the 1979 and 1983 floods, and
5. WHEREAS using Ross Barnett Reservoir as a flood control reservoir will require, in the event of heavy rainfall in the upper Pearl River watershed, that large quantities of water be rapidly released from the reservoir and moved through the One Lake and the Pearl River downstream of the lake so as to provide flood water storage capacity in Barnett Reservoir, and
6. WHEREAS the water level in Ross Barnett Reservoir could be required to fluctuate , which will result in grounding and/or other damage to boats anchored at marinas and private boat docks around Ross Barnett Reservoir unless those boats are removed from the Reservoir, and
7. WHEREAS large fluctuations in water levels of Ross Barnett Reservoir will have a detrimental effect on reproduction of largemouth bass, crappie, catfish and other species of game fish, and
8. WHEREAS the proposed One Lake Project would permanently destroy at least 1000 acres of stream forest and emergent wetlands, resulting in decreased habitat complexity and decreased wildlife diversity and the possibility of establishment of nuisance plants and animals, and
9. WHEREAS the proposed One Lake Project would permanently destroy an undetermined acreage of bottomland hardwood habitat, and
10. WHEREAS the proposed lake will alter or flood a portion of LeFleur’s Bluff State Park, which was developed with Land and Water Conservation Fund Act monies, and which will have to be replaced with lands of at least fair market value, usefulness, and location as that being lost, and

11. WHEREAS recreational activities such as camping and hiking at LeFleur's Bluff State Park would be replaced with water-related recreational opportunities, and these activities would be limited to those persons who have both access to appropriate equipment such as boats and a desire for such water related activities, and

12. WHEREAS there are two closed municipal landfills which would be partially or fully inundated by the proposed lakes, and the effects of this inundation have not been adequately studied, and

13. WHEREAS the proposed lakes may cause increased river flooding and headcutting downstream of the Jackson Metropolitan Area in such locations as Monticello and Columbia, and

14. WHEREAS the proposed lakes will cause increased flash flooding during heavy rains in the Jackson Metropolitan Area as a result of higher water levels of tributary streams caused by impoundment of the Pearl River, resulting in flash flooding in areas of Jackson that have never flooded before, and

15. WHEREAS the proposed lakes will act as a trap for urban runoff in the Jackson Metropolitan Area which will result in stagnant pools during seasonal low-flow periods with high levels of garbage and pollutants, including sewage, and said garbage will have to be removed at an unknown but presumably very high cost, and

16. WHEREAS the Pearl River in the area of the proposed lakes provides habitat for a rich assemblage of native mussel and fish species which cannot exist in a reservoir environment , and

17. WHEREAS the Pearl River in the area of the proposed lakes provides habitat for two federally listed species, the Ringed Sawback Turtle and the Gulf Sturgeon, and the proposed lakes would be completely unsuitable for either of these two species, and

18. WHEREAS there are resolutions against the One Lake project by the Mississippi Commission on Marine Resources(2015), St. Tammany Parish Government(2013), and Washington Parish Government(2018), and

19. WHEREAS the dilution of effluent discharged to the Pearl River by 98 NPDES permits in Mississippi and 8 NPDES permits in Louisiana would be made more difficult and expensive by a project such as this one that withholds and evaporates fresh water, and

20. WHEREAS the Mississippi Governor's Oyster Council Final Report (2015) identifies harm to oyster production and restoration from "inland freshwater depleting projects" like this one on a major coastal river, and

21. WHEREAS multiple BP oil spill settlement marsh, shoreline and oyster reef restoration projects near the mouth of the Pearl River and costing more than \$70 million in Mississippi alone depend on stable salinities and will be less likely to succeed if fresh water discharge from the Pearl becomes diminished,

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Jackson Audubon Society opposes the construction of the One Lake Project.

Furthermore, a serious treatment of flood control in the Jackson Metropolitan Area should follow national trends away from additional floodplain development. Taxpayers should not be asked to foot the bill for a project that sells private development as a public benefit in the guise of flood control.

MEMORANDUM OF SUPPORT FOR THE RESOLUTION
(numbered items relate to numbered items in the above Resolution)

(Barnett turned into flood control reservoir)

6. The homeowners around Ross Barnett Reservoir will have, in the event of a draw down of Ross Barnett for flood control, mudflats in their backyards.

(3,479 acres of bottomland hardwoods impacted)

9. Bottomland hardwoods provide important habitat for many wildlife species. Deciduous trees process water through transpiration, and remove and sequester carbon dioxide from the atmosphere, both of which enhance the urban environment of Jackson.

(Destruction of state park)

10. The proposed lake would require the excavation of a major portion of the LeFleur's Bluff State Park to allow the lake to expand and accommodate the proposed island. Because a portion of this park land was developed with Land and Water Conservation Fund Act (16 USC 4601) monies, an evaluation must be completed to conclude that the proposed action is the overall least environmentally damaging practicable alternative and that there are no other practicable alternatives to taking the park land. Necessary minimized adverse effects/land taking of the park lands must be mitigated through property acquisition (i.e., rather than monetary payment for damages) to the mutual agreement of the owner of the public recreation lands and the Secretary of the U. S. Department of the Interior. Replacement property must be of at least equal fair market value, usefulness, and location as that being proposed for conversion.

(Destruction of state park)

11. The outdoor recreational area around LeFleur's Bluff State Park (the Mayes Lakes Complex and trails) would be inundated with water to cover part of the trail system and some of the park's oxbows and sloughs. The wetland educational programs provided by the Museum of Natural Science in this outdoor classroom would be obliterated.

(Landfills)

12. City landfills which may be within the footprint of the proposed lake have unknown contents. Because no detailed information is now available about the clay cap, the presence of pollutants, and maintenance agreements required to maintain them and prevent pollutants from leaking into the lakes, these landfills should be investigated prior to making a commitment to developing the One Lake Plan. Leaching of buried and sequestered pollutants into Pearl River waters harms river dependent species and estuarine species in coastal Mississippi and Louisiana. It is anticipated that the landfill and its contents may require relocation to an existing landfill or new landfill.

(Increase in flash flooding)

14. The probability of flash flooding in the Jackson area will be increased. The proposed lake, depending on the pool elevation, may back water up the tributary streams, and when there are heavy rains in the Jackson area, the water from these rains will not move down the tributaries and into the Pearl River as fast as it does now. This could result in a significant increase in flash flooding due to water back-up along those tributaries draining into the proposed lake. Given that

the frequency of rainfall events of greater than 3 inches in the Jackson area is approximately once every 0.89 years (Weather Bureau data from 1896 through 2002), flash flooding could become a real problem along these tributaries.

(Federally listed species habitat)

17. The proposed One Lakes Project will destroy several river miles of habitat for the endemic Ringed Sawback Turtle, a federally threatened species. This habitat will require mitigation, which will require the purchase and preservation of several river miles elsewhere in the Pearl River. This will substantially increase the cost of the project, if the USFWS allows it at all. In addition, the USFWS has designated critical habitat for the federally listed Gulf Sturgeon which includes the project area. The development of this project will substantially impact the spawning movements of Gulf Sturgeon up the Pearl River to the Barnett Reservoir.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION:

(Cost underestimated)

17 The cost of past lake projects on the Pearl River excluded the costs of relocating roads, highways and railroads, overhead and underground utilities, moving existing businesses, moving water and sewer lines, and purchasing property. These costs will ultimately be passed along to the consumers and tax payers of Mississippi.

(West Bank Interceptor Sewage System)

The West Bank Interceptor is a sewer main that carries large flows of sanitary waste from North Jackson to the City of Jackson Waste Water Treatment Plant on the Pearl River at Savannah Street. This fifteen plus mile conduit conveys sewage via gravity and some electric pumping stations. This sewer main is located along the west bank of the Pearl River floodplain as evidenced by the concrete towers whose tops are required to be elevated above the highest known flood crest. The One Lake project may require relocation of this sewer system. A new system would require the same method of flow (gravity conditions) to facilitate a cost effective means of transport of the sewage. Continuous inundation of this conduit is unacceptable for repair and creates a high risk opportunity for the release of untreated contaminants in the Pearl River System. The cost for relocating this system has not been addressed by Mr. McGowan.

(Wetland functions lost)

The wetland functions that are beneficial to the environment and society now operating within the proposed One Lakes Project area would be permanently lost. These beneficial functions include but are not limited to water quality and nutrient and pollution absorption and breakdown, buffering of flood flows, sediment stabilization, transpiration of water to the atmosphere and carbon sequestration and provisions for fish and wildlife habitat.

(Habitat diversity impacted)

Wetlands with irregular wetland/upland boundaries are more likely to support a higher diversity of wildlife. Aerial photographs indicate that wetlands in the proposed One Lake Project site possess irregular boundaries. The high degree of vegetative/water interspersion observed in the study site supports a great diversity of flora and fauna that would be permanently lost.

(Urban runoff; no flushing action; water quality)

The drainage ditches and creeks which now drain urban runoff and untreated leaking, broken, and overflowing sewage lines into the Pearl River will be further impounded by a low head dam so that flushing action in the project area will be reduced. This pooled area will have minimal current, especially in drought conditions, and will receive all of the point and non-point pollution from Jackson that the Pearl River now receives.

(Fish kills & garbage)

The Pearl River below Ross Barnett Reservoir and above Lakeland Drive already suffers from fish kills, due to low dissolved oxygen levels, during the summer. Reducing the current even further will result in more fish kills which will not make this area an attractive recreational destination. Additionally, all of the garbage, including Styrofoam, soft drink cans, old tires, and particularly plastics of all sizes and shapes, that normally winds up in the Pearl and which is carried downstream, will now end up in the proposed LeFleur's Lakes Project area. The removal of this garbage will be costly and should be included in the maintenance cost of operating this project.

(New boat ramp)

The new boat ramp located on the Pearl River at LeFleur's Bluff State Park, that was constructed to provide access to the Pearl River for fishing and recreational boating will be inundated with water.

(Access by fishermen)

The Pearl River must remain a public waterway with all rights of use and access intact.

(Integrity of Barnett Reservoir Dam)

May no longer be relevant since lake will not touch dam's downstream side.

The project proposes to establish residential and commercial ventures within 10,000 acres of the Pearl River floodplain, directly downstream of the Ross Barnett Reservoir Dam structure and in harm's way should the latter fail.

(Bank Caving)

During low flow of the Pearl River and while the lakes are filling, there would be times when flows to the lower river would be reduced to near zero, possibly causing bank failures downstream.