

# HIGH ROCK LAKE ASSOCIATION, INC.

## NEWSLETTER – SPRING 2013

Our Mission: "To Foster and Promote the Welfare of High Rock Lake and the Yadkin River..."

Chartered in the State of North Carolina since 1954, our mission has not changed; our efforts are directed to protecting the rights and interests of property owners, area businesses, and users of this waterway by interacting with state, local, and federal agencies, including law enforcement, and the general public, to raise awareness to the issues of water quality, water uses, and protection of the environment. Your Association is managed by a Board of Directors, unpaid volunteers and your neighbors, who are willing to serve our membership and maintain the vigilance over these vital resources. Be sure to send in your membership dues for this year.

### RECENT EVENTS:

Several significant events have occurred since our general meeting of last October. At the Board's meeting in November, our President for many years, Larry Jones, presented his letter of resignation as President but indicated that he would remain active on the board. Reluctantly, the board accepted his letter and, subsequently, elected Len Strong, formerly Vice President, as President. Len accepted the post and led the board in a standing ovation of thanks to Larry for his many years of extraordinary service. He then asked the board to establish a nomination committee to select a new candidate for Vice President. Larry's letter is included in this newsletter. Len also asked the board to help him with the many challenges ahead.

At their regular meeting in mid-January, the Davidson County Board of Commissioners listened to our presentation and request to reconsider endorsing the RSA, the Relicensing Settlement Agreement. We stressed that the agreement, hashed out over 5 years, was a fair and manageable set of compromises which had many benefits to all the stakeholders in the lake and which was still not in force despite having been originally signed by many stakeholders over 6 years ago! It was also pointed out that Alcoa (APGI) was the only company that has signed the RSA and agreed to implement the terms and conditions in writing! The Commissioners agreed and by majority vote, endorsed the agreement.

In mid-March, at the request of Larry Jones, a meeting was arranged with the staff and Assistant Secretary of the No. Carolina Dept. of Commerce and DENR (Dept. of Energy & Natural Resources) to discuss our SWIPP report (see below). On March 19th, members of our board (Larry Jones, Len Strong, and Mel Wofford) as well as Dennis Lemly, the author of our SWIPP, traveled to Raleigh to discuss the current conditions along the Yadkin as represented in the SWIPP and the status of current permitting and monitoring programs under DENR and DWQ (Dept of Water Quality) . The Asst. Secretary, Mitchell Gillespie, has promised to develop a plan of action to implement several programs and to keep us posted on a regular basis. Several specific recommendations were discussed including stricter fines for polluters, especially municipal wastewater operators, fees for county operated landfills, regular testing for specific metals, and making more DWQ data available for public access. A surprise issue was the classification of High Rock Lake as a "non-drinking " resource. It was pointed out that both the cities of Salisbury and Denton take their drinking water directly from the Lake. Changing this classification will be addressed again at the upcoming meeting between the board and DWQ on May 21st. Hopefully, we were successful in re-emphasizing the urgency of taking specific actions in each of these areas.

In this same meeting, interaction between DENR, DWQ, and federal agencies such as EPA and FDA was discussed as well as the restrictions placed by the oversight committee known as the "Environmental Management Commission", a body appointed by the governor. These limitations need to be more carefully reviewed.

Since then and in the last week of April, it was announced that Alcoa and the Stanly County Commissioners had reached a tentative agreement resolving all outstanding issues of the Yadkin Project relicensing process. Both Alcoa and Stanly County officials have expressed real satisfaction with the agreement and a desire to begin working together for the community, including further development of the Badin Business Park. A formal vote of the County Commissioners took place Mon., May 6, and the agreement was approved. The terms included defining new water withdrawal standards, preparations for a new waste treatment plant, and finding new job opportunities for the area.

And mark your calendars; a public hearing by the DWQ on the issuance of the 401 water quality certificate is scheduled for May 14th in Albemarle at the government center.

## **SWIPP?**

What is it? Surface Water Improvement and Protection Plan. More than a year ago, your Board commissioned a report to state the current status of our waterway, looking at pollution and polluters, affects on public health, aquatic life, and recreation activities, and assessing economic impacts. The study went on to offer constructive solutions for property owners, state and municipal agencies, and federal programs. Excerpts from this report were shown at the October general membership meeting; based on your reactions at that meeting, the board has chosen to use this information on a very directed and carefully managed way to obtain the maximum ( and earliest) possible results. The report has made available up-to-date information on impairments and pollution sources. Perhaps the most glaring problem is the lack of enforcement of existing laws and standards. This report will be discussed again at the upcoming Board of Director meeting on May 21st at Yarborough's restaurant in Lexington.

## **BOATING SAFETY CAMPAIGN**

At a recent luncheon in Denton for law enforcement and support groups, Alcoa staff announced upcoming events as a part of their annual boating safety promotion. This program includes a special public event at the Flat Swamp swimming access area off Rt. 8 on Sat., June 8th, from 11 to 1 PM including making free life jackets available to children. Watch your local papers for more details.