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DENR-Division of Water Quality, Planning Section
1671 Mail Service Center
Raleigh, NC 27699-1617

Attention: Rich Gannon

Re: Jordan Lake Rules

Dear Mr. Gannon:

I spoke at the evening meeting held on July 17th at Elon University. Since that meeting, I have talked with several elected officials, local city managers, farmers, developers, and business owners. People are concerned that the billion plus dollars needed to implement these new rules will be a huge economical burden on the residents of the upper Haw River Basin.

Municipal officials are quick to point out their cities have purchased land, built reservoirs, developed their water systems and built wastewater treatment plants that are operating in compliance with their current government issued discharge permits. It is the general consensus the Environmental Management Commission is being pressured and used by the municipalities drawing water from the lake to gain a cleaner and cheaper water supply at our expense. We should not be burdened or held economically responsible for the failure of these municipalities who could not or did not have the foresight to develop their water resources.

During the engineering phase of the lake, I attended public hearings held by the core of engineers and remember published current events explaining the advantages of constructing the lake. I cannot remember one statement ever made suggesting this lake would be used for a public water supply. Quite to the contrary, the idea for the lake was flood control for the lower Cape Fear River. At the time, given the quality of the water in the river, there was much debate Jordan Lake would become a cesspool. It was even discussed as to whether or not the lake could be used for recreational purposes and certainly not for human consumption.

Your published data shows the water in the Haw River arm of the lake is retained less than seven days while the New Hope arm retains water in excess of a year and a half. Water is discharged through the ecosystem of a swamp faster than it flows through the New Hope arm of the lake. This would indicate the cities that are drawing raw water from the New Hope arm of the lake are processing swamp water.

It is beyond imagination the core of engineers would design a lake for a water supply without taking into consideration the hydrological characteristics of the lake. However, if this is the case the lake has a design flaw that should be addressed and corrected by the federal government.

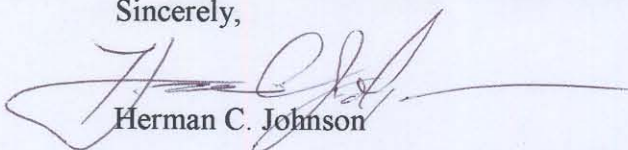
If the municipalities drawing water from the lake want cleaner water, they can either bear the expense of upgrading their water plants to clean the water to potable standards or bear the expense of upgrading our wastewater treatment facilities or both.

At worst, this is a shabby attempt by the municipalities using water from the lake to influence the Environmental Management Commission to clean up their water supply.

At best, it is a regional environmental issue that should be addressed and paid for by the affected regions of the Haw River and New Hope basins, the municipal water users, the State of North Carolina, and the federal government.

I appreciate the opportunity to have expressed my views and the views of the people I have spoken with. The residents of the upper Haw River Basin consider this a serious economic matter. If these rules are implemented the cost should be fairly distributed.

Sincerely,



Herman C. Johnson

I am Herman Johnson. I live at 372 Boundary St. Haw River, NC.

I reside and own acreage adjoining the banks of the Haw River.

By looking at me, you can tell that I pre-date Jordan Lake. I recall the debates concerning the engineering and construction of the lake. It was widely published that Jordan Lake was for flood control for the lower Cape Fear River and was never intended to be used as a water supply. At the time, given the quality of the water in the river there was much debate that Jordan Lake would become a cesspool that could never be used for human consumption. The conventional wisdom of the day was that North Carolina had an abundance of water and therefore, Jordan Lake would never be needed as a source of water supply.

Let there be no mistake, this is not an environmental issue; this is a domestic water supply issue cloaked in an environmental skin. Let me say that again, let there be no mistake, this is not an environmental issue; this is a domestic water supply issue cloaked in an environmental skin.

I have been in the business of plumbing and installing water and sewer for 45 years. When the Greensboro Metro Plant and the East Burlington Wastewater Treatment Plant were constructed, my company did the plumbing. My company has also performed work on contracts and subcontracts in the majority of wastewater and water treatment plants in this area. I can remember being in construction meetings with the architects and engineers responsible for the design and construction of these plants. The engineers were proud of the fact they were using state of the art leading edge technology in their designs. It is mandated by government agency issued wastewater discharge permits that these plants operate within their design capacities. The Environmental Management Commission is now asking us to go beyond the design limits of our plants and install unproven technology at a cost of 500 million to 1 billion dollars that will be passed on to the residents in the affected area.

I want to take this opportunity to challenge the counties and municipalities within the Haw River Basin to ban together and study the credibility of the data presented by the Environmental Management Commission and develop a fair and unbiased report. The contents of this report should be presented to the media for accurate reporting to the public. These issues are far too great and expensive not to use the courts to resolve the matter if necessary.

In summary, throughout the history of the lake, it was common knowledge and well published that the quality of water in Jordan Lake was not going to be good. Therefore, the residents of the Triad should not be burdened and forced to control our agricultural operations, curtail our development by regulating storm water runoff and upgrading our wastewater treatment plants to meet new and unreasonable standards as outlined by the Environmental Management Commission. Those standards are based on unproven technology and should not be applied just so the Triangle area can reap the benefits and continue to grow at our expense.

Let there be no doubt, these issues are not about algae blooms and 50 dead fish. This is about water supply for our neighbors to the east. If we are forced to meet these standards then how are we to be compensated?