

HIGH ROCK LAKE ... March 1, 2009

As Spring 2009 approaches we begin to wonder about water levels and lake management issues for the upcoming Recreational season. The Officers and Directors of the High Rock Lake Association are extremely disappointed that we are entering this 2009 season without the benefits promised under terms of a new Relicensing Agreement we negotiated over a 5 year period. We've reported in previous articles about the efforts of other interests to delay or modify the pending FERC License. The intense opposition lobbying has succeeded so far, and we appear to be entering another season in which the lake will be operated under terms of the 1958 License.

We've told you about Stanly County interests and the NC legislatures actions in previous postings. Recently a new opponent to the Relicensing has emerged; it's known as the Yadkin Riverkeeper. This organization, headed by a Winston Salem lawyer and only organized last year, has decided the HRLA and 30 some other state, federal, and non-governmental groups were not qualified to reach a Relicensing Settlement Agreement. The Riverkeeper has started a campaign to get the State to refuse a Water Quality permit for Alcoa, a needed part of the FERC process. The Riverkeeper organization has a history of litigation, and some believe they see the Alcoa case as fertile hunting grounds. Please tell everyone you know, especially your elected officials, that the Yadkin Riverkeeper is NOT representing the interest of High Rock Lake.

We have no news to report on the actions of the Environmental Review Commission. Although the legislation required a report from the EMC by February 1, 2009, that deadline passed without any comment we know of by the EMC. EMC staff will not respond to our inquiries, and they have ignored HRLA requests to be involved in their process.

The Association had several inquires this winter from members wanting to know if water levels would be lowered enough to permit pier maintenance. Alcoa was concerned with long range weather forecasts that indicated a strong possibility of drought conditions in 2009. Alcoa wanted to keep winter water levels higher than normal to enable meeting spring water level goals in the event river flows remained low. Considering the current conditions, we are fortunate to have plenty of water in the lakes at this time.

Even though we are enjoying a generous rainfall event as this article is written, we are facing another potential drought. The Drought Management Team, of which the HRLA is a member, is scheduled to resume meetings on March 5, 2009. We will carefully monitor climatic conditions and predicted lake levels to insure High Rock lake levels will receive all possible consideration, just as we have for the past six years to prevent a recurrence of 2002's disastrous low levels. We are very fortunate to have Alcoa's voluntary cooperation in this Drought Management process, even though they are forced to continue operating under old license terms. If the new license were in effect as proposed, lake levels and low inflow conditions would automatically trigger operating procedures that would protect our lake levels and limit downstream discharges.

If you have questions or comments about lake issues or the relicensing process, please e-mail us at HRLA@HRLA.COM, or write to us at PO Box 159, Southmont, NC 27351. The Officers and Board of the High Rock Lake Association will continue our efforts to promote the issuance of a new Federal License that provides for the best interests of the membership of our Association.