



PREPARED BY:
LUMBER RIVER COUNCIL
OF GOVERNMENTS

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TOWN OF WHITE LAKE

LAKE MANAGEMENT STRATEGIC PLAN

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INTRODUCTION

This plan has been developed to set out certain tenets and suitable strategies and action steps that could be used in building the framework for a *Comprehensive Lake Management Plan* (LMP) for White Lake. An outline developed by the Lumber River Council of Governments (LRCOG) and adopted by the White Lake Town Board that was utilized in development of this strategic plan is found in **Attachment 1**. It is the intent of this plan to set forth evidence related to several key issues that have been in dispute as far back as the 1930s as well as to establish tenants and priorities for future efforts. Exhaustive research of documents spanning the last 90 plus years provides the backdrop for this plan.

This strategic plan examines seven (7) areas that are critical elements in the crafting of a future LMP. These seven areas are:

1. ***Delineation of authority.*** The lake body itself is the property of the State of North Carolina and its citizens. The need to understand the state agencies involved in the oversight of the lake, their authority, and their cooperation for the development and successful implementation of a LMP is a cornerstone for a successful outcome.
2. ***Review and catalog the technical studies and reports which exist and recommend others that may be needed.*** There have been many technical studies and reports generated about various aspects of the lake. There may be a desire to undertake additional studies to determine more specific details as part of the LMP. Potential follow-up studies are discussed in this plan.
3. ***Consolidate the key issues being put forth by town staff, officials, residents, visitors, and stakeholders.*** In many instances, these come from the same concerns, but with different viewpoints. In other cases, there is unanimity of the issues and concerns. A LMP will not be able to address every conceivable issue and concern, therefore the initial list of these issues needs to be a workable number.
4. ***Delineate the role of the Town of White Lake.*** While there are state agencies that have authority over the lake, the Town of White Lake and its residents are significant partners in developing and successfully implementing a LMP. A number of problems experienced by the lake can be directly attributed to activities taking place around the lake. The development and implementation of effective land use controls is one of the key strategies that can have the greatest impact on the quality of the lake.

5. ***Catalog existing data on the runoff of stormwater and other discharges into the lake.*** A specific issue that has been easily identified as a major contributor to the deterioration of lake water quality is stormwater runoff and other related discharges into the groundwater immediately around the lake or directly into the lake waters.
6. ***Identify the stakeholders involved in the lake management discussion.*** These include the state agencies referred to in the following pages, town residents, Bladen County officials and residents, neighboring area land owners, and visitors. Relationships need to be mended and representatives from affected parties should be encouraged to be a part of the solution.
7. ***Develop a list of Action Steps that are needed to successfully manage the lake going forward.*** There are certain activities and steps that are easily identified. Some of these steps can have an immediate impact on the health of the lake, others will take time and a concerted / focused effort over a longer period of time. These steps are outlined in this section.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Any discussion about White Lake should begin with its history.

There has been a lot written about the early geologic beginnings of the lake. Many theories have been developed, written about, studied, and explored over the past century. Many have been disproven, as time has allowed for new understandings through science and technology. Parts of others have survived to be woven into new theories to be tested, rejected, or accepted.

White Lake is described as a “bay lake”. A bay lake is defined as a shallow, elliptical depression outlined by a sand ridge. They are typically oriented along a northwest to southeast axis. White Lake is unusual in that it does not have an inlet as there is no feeder stream and little, if any, runoff from surrounding watersheds. This lack of an inlet is why White Lake’s water is clear.

Looking at an aerial view of eastern North Carolina, it is easy to spot these elliptical shapes that make up the many bays and wetlands. Many are minor depressions that have been drained and are used for agricultural purposes. The deeper depressions that have the ability to retain water are wetlands or lakes. One of the latest theories on their development is that scouring of the depressions by the prevailing winds account for their unique formations. There are other theories such as a meteor strike during one of the ice ages. Later in this plan is a section devoted to the geology and hydrology of White Lake based upon the most recent research and studies. It is important to understand the dynamics in play within the groundwater system.

Historical documents generally speak to Bladen County being initially inhabited by indigenous Native Americans until the late 1700s. White Lake is purported to have been referred to as Silver Lake by local Native Americans. By the early 1800s, immigrants from Europe began settling the area. These new settlers were generally Scotch Irish, but other Europeans also appeared in the area. During the early 1800s, logging for timber and the extraction and distillation of turpentine was a prominent part of the growth in the area. As the timber became less available, the settlers turned to other agricultural endeavors.

For White Lake, the clarity of the water attracted a number of people to build homes along the lakeshore. By the 1930s, the area was being touted as an ideal spot for vacationing, fishing and hunting. By the 1950s, growth around the lake had accelerated. Aerial photographs from that time show an expanding growth pattern around the lakeshore. In the late 1950s, documentation appeared describing that this encroachment was having an effect on water quality through leaking septic tanks and increased motorboat traffic. The installation of the town’s water and sewer system in the very early 1960s can be tied back to the issue of leaking septic tanks. The last fifty years has seen development of a lake shoreline and surrounding area that almost encircles the lake.