

Comments of Bill Hayes, Commander of the 82nd Flotilla of the U. S. Coast Guard Auxillary, Based in Rainbow City, AL

We are responsible for watching and maintaining three reservoirs, Weiss Lake, Neely Henry Lake, and Lake Logan Martin. Our primary purpose is public safety of people on the water, whether they are engaged in swimming or boating. We try to keep it as safe as possible. As long as I wear the Coast Guard uniform, I cannot offer opinions on political, judicial or any similar issues. However, I feel it is necessary to raise awareness of the potential for many safety issues if they do lower this water level. I grew up in Cherokee County and remember before the lake levels came up. The average depth of Weiss Lake is only two feet. Yes, they have channel markers there, but if the lake level is lowered, it will expose more hazards and we will have big problems with respect to public safety. Here on Neely Henry, we don't have markers, so it will increase the stumps and problems even more. On Logan Martin, there are some markers, but there again I think it is just common sense that if you lower these water levels, you expose the public to a tremendous increase in the possibility of having boating accidents. We spoke about economic problems and other problems here tonight, but I see a major problem with public safety if water levels are lowered.