

Recreation Vision Statement
For the Weiss Development

Weiss Lake is well known as the “Crappie Capital of the World”. The reservoir and its fishery account for much of Cherokee County’s tourism industry, including a significant number of out-of-state visitors. Heavy fishing pressure and a lack of good recruitment in recent years appears to be contributing to a decline in fishing quality. Bank fishing access to the reservoir shoreline as well as access to the tailwater below Weiss dam is limited.

Much of Weiss Lake is shallow. Boat navigation can be challenging and some coves are difficult to navigate into or out of at low water levels. Siltation over time has contributed to this problem. Shallow waters coupled with upstream pollution and shoreline run-off also contribute to water quality problems in the lake. The lake has been identified as an impaired waterway by the state.

The long-term vision for the Weiss development is to acknowledge the importance of its unique fishery, including its importance to the local economy, protect and sustain the quality of that fishery, and improve the water quality of the lake (with the goal of removing it from the 303d list). The vision also seeks to ensure adequate public access both to the reservoir shoreline and tailwater.

Improvements to be considered at the Weiss Development include:

- Improving access and facilities for bank fishing.
- Reevaluating current catch limits to reduce pressure on the crappie population.
- Providing education on the water quality of the lake.
- Developing maps and other navigational aids to improve safety and aid boat navigation on the reservoir.
- Optimizing the capacity of existing facilities to accommodate demand.
- Providing improved access to the downstream areas for motorized and non-motorized boating opportunities.
- Managing lake level drawdowns so as to minimize the occurrence of surface elevations lower than 561’, recognizing the need to meet flood control, power generation, and downstream flow responsibilities at Weiss.

IAG Recreation Vision Statement
for the Neely Henry Development

Much of the Neely Henry development is characterized by shallow, riverine like conditions, particularly upstream of Highway 77 (near the Rainbow City Marina) and the City of Gadsden. Boat navigation upstream of Highway 77 can be challenging due to shallower water and submerged stumps. Recreational opportunities in that area consist primarily of boat fishing. The lower portion of the reservoir (downstream of Highway 77) offers a broader variety of recreation opportunities including pleasure boating. Portions of the reservoir shoreline within the City of Gadsden offer urban recreation opportunities including day-use park areas and two shoreline boardwalk trails, one in Black Creek that provides wildlife viewing opportunities and one along the main body of the reservoir near the river boat landing.

The Neely Henry reservoir supports a very good spotted and largemouth bass fishery, as well as a crappie fishery. Recreation facilities to accommodate large fishing tournaments have been constructed on the reservoir in the City of Gadsden. These tournaments and other recreation activities associated with the reservoir support an important tourism industry for Gadsden. At times there can be considerable boat traffic traveling upstream and downstream to and from the major boat launching area in Gadsden, which is centrally located on the reservoir.

The long-term vision for the Neely Henry development is to protect and enhance its high quality fishery, to provide opportunities for the urban population located in the immediate vicinity of the reservoir, and to minimize potential conflicts between users of the reservoir.

Improvements to be considered at the Neely Henry development include:

- Protecting and enhancing public bank fishing access.
- Supporting efforts to expand shoreline trail opportunities, particularly in populated areas of the reservoir.
- Investigating public access and day-use needs along the eastern shoreline of the reservoir in the City of Ohatchee.
- Investigating opportunities to relocate the boat ramp at Ten Islands Park to separate day users and swimmers from boaters and alleviate parking conflicts.
- Investigating potential fishing pier opportunities associated with construction of a new bridge over Big Canoe Creek (utilize old bridge abutments for fishing).
- Address user conflicts (for example, at the County Rd 24 bridge over Palmetto Creek).
- Improving the safety of boat travel on the lake, particularly between Highway 77 and Gadsden.

Recreation Vision Statement
For the Logan Martin Development

The Logan Martin Development offers outstanding fishing opportunities, which support numerous tournaments and tourism in the local area, particularly for Pell City. There are two very different types of recreational use areas on the reservoir. The north end of the reservoir (approximately above Riverside or Interstate 20) is more riverine while the southern end is wider creating more of a lake setting and supporting a wider range of recreation activities, including more sailing activity than on other Coosa reservoirs. Most of the recreation facilities are in the lower part of the lake.

The Talladega side of the reservoir is less developed and has more open land. However, this is expected to change over time due to increasing development pressures associated with new industry in the area and the influence of Interstate 20 as a growth corridor.

The long-term vision for the Logan Martin Development is to provide for a diversity of recreation opportunities (including fishing, motorized boating, sailing, and swimming), to protect the fishery, and to enhance public access and facilities.

Improvements to be considered at the Logan Martin Development include:

- Maintaining and enhancing public access for fishing, including tournaments, and other recreational activities.
- Investigating the potential for additional bank fishing facilities and access.
- Increasing sanitation facilities at existing public access points and investigating the need for additional pump-out facilities.
- Improving notification and communication regarding flood events.
- Promoting measures, in coordination with the Department of Public Health and others that will reduce fish toxicity to safe, consumable levels such that fish advisories are no longer necessary.
- Managing recreation use to the extent possible so as to minimize potential conflicts with shoreline property owners as well as other recreation users.
- Managing lake levels in the winter to improve boating access, including access to sloughs, by minimizing the occurrence of surface elevations below 462', recognizing the need to meet flood control, power generation, and downstream flow responsibilities at Logan Martin.

IAG Recreation Vision Statement
for the Lay Development

The Lay development offers outstanding boating and fishing opportunities. The reservoir supports a high quality sport fishery. Research conducted by ADCNR indicates exceptional bass condition and growth. Fishing is a primary year-round recreational activity on the lake and attracts numerous small and medium sized tournaments annually, as well as many individual boaters. Recreational boating, including canoeing and sailing, and jet ski use, is also a popular activity on the reservoir particularly during the warm weather months.

The northern portion of the reservoir is relatively narrow offering a highly scenic, riverine setting. The southern portion of the reservoir widens modestly from Wilsonville to Lay Dam. Submerged, standing trees, left in the reservoir for fish habitat, make navigation on the reservoir a challenge and have raised concerns of some stakeholders regarding the overall safety of the reservoir for boating. The western shoreline of the reservoir, downstream from Wilsonville, is characterized by heavy residential development. The eastern shoreline of the reservoir is relatively remote with limited public access sites. Development pressures around the reservoir are expected to result in continuing development of the shoreline, which over time could threaten water quality, impact scenic values and limit public access to the shoreline in some areas. A potential new bridge crossing could also influence development pressures and may change demand for public shoreline access to the eastern shore of the reservoir.

The long-term vision for the Lay development is to protect and enhance its high quality fishery while providing for a diversity of recreation opportunities consistent with the desired physical characteristics of the reservoir.

Improvements to be considered at the Lay development include:

- Ensuring adequate maintenance of public recreation facilities.
- Improving public access for bank fishing.
- Improving the safety of boat travel on the lake.
- Investigating shoreline trail and river trail opportunities, including boat carry-in access sites for canoeing opportunities.
- Investigating public access opportunities along the eastern shore of the lake, including potential demand for a large capacity boat ramp facility and day use area.
- Optimizing the capacity, operations and maintenance of existing recreation facilities to accommodate existing and future demand.
- Consider improving access for swimming.
- Development of new facilities if a proven need arises, such as improved and primitive camping.

Recreation Vision Statement
For the Mitchell Development

The Mitchell Development provides a unique natural setting in comparison to the other reservoirs in the basin. It appears that the lake can support a more primitive type of recreation opportunity than the other developments on the Coosa River.

The natural values of the Mitchell reservoir and surrounding lands are a result of location, which affords limited access on the east side of the lake and by the fact that the development already has significant lands located within the project boundary dedicated to wildlife habitat and public recreational use.

As a result of these existing conditions it is felt that the Mitchell Development can support alternative non-power recreational boating and primitive camping, as well as the current level of traditional power boating type recreation common to this reservoir and the other Coosa hydro developments. It is the long-term vision for the Mitchell Development to maintain the reservoir's existing character, provide for and promote primitive recreation opportunities, and better accommodate the current demand for power boat access consistent with the lake's existing character. Any development for motorized uses should be similar in size and character to the existing Higgins Ferry site (or smaller), and be capable of accommodating groups, such as bass clubs. Such development should be focused on the western shore or northern end of the lake. Efforts should be made to preserve and protect the more primitive nature of the eastern shore.

Improvements to be considered at the Mitchell Development include:

- Planning to optimize current public accessible recreation facilities with regard to trailer rig parking and other improvements to public amenities such as barrier removal to ensure conformance, to the extent possible, with and Americans With Disability Act.
- Examine the need for an additional public boat ramp, to accommodate demands from the northern area of the lake, consistent with the vision statement.
- Examine a future carry-in access site and facilities for environmental education, within the recreation plan, in support of non-power boating and education opportunities (i.e., facilities for environmental education and a conference center at the old Boy Scout Camp).
- Examine the potential for primitive camping opportunities on Mitchell Lake.
- Determine what opportunities are available to increase "bank fishing" capacity and quality at the reservoir.

Recreation Vision Statement
For the Jordan Development

The Jordan Reservoir provides a natural setting with relatively steep shorelines and clear, deep waters. Shoreline development is relatively light, particularly in the upper half of the reservoir, which offers excellent opportunities for wildlife viewing and other recreation opportunities. The size of the impoundment suggests it is most suitable for a medium intensity level of use. The reservoir appears to serve primarily as a local and regional destination.

The Coosa River, below Jordan Dam is the last free flowing section of the Coosa River that offers whitewater opportunities. The river offers unique opportunities for both beginning and advanced level paddlers and is one of the best teaching/training rivers in the southeast. The river also offers a unique high quality warm water fishery for spotted bass and other species. The river draws users from throughout the southeast and is the site of an annual whitewater festival and rodeo, which has an international draw and contributes to the local economy. The river provides year around boating due to warm, clean water. The river also provides valuable education and interpretive opportunities.

The long-term vision for the Jordan Reservoir is to protect the remote, natural character of the upper lake, while managing the lake for medium intensity recreation, particularly fishing, boating, and swimming activities.

The long-term vision for the Jordan tailrace is to recognize and protect and enhance the unique natural characteristics of the river and promote the whitewater paddling and fishing opportunities that it offers.

Improvements to be considered at Jordan Reservoir include:

- Optimizing and enhancing current public accessible recreation facilities to better accommodate demand consistent with the vision for the reservoir, including providing sanitation facilities.
- Promoting and providing for bank fishing access.
- Ensuring adequate surveillance at facilities to control vandalism.
- Investigating the demand for additional swimming opportunities on Jordan Lake.

Improvements to be considered in the tailrace below Jordan Dam include:

- Enhancing current public access sites to better accommodate demand.
- Investigating the need for additional public access points.
- Promoting interpretation and education of natural resources.
- Managing water flows to protect and enhance unique recreational experiences, while recognizing other project responsibilities such as flood control, power generation and upstream reservoir recreation opportunities.
- Investigating the need for trail opportunities in the project area, potentially linking to the existing Swayback Trail.