

## Cullman County Commission



### Frequently Asked Questions About Smith Lake as a Water Source V. Building a Duck River Reservoir Water Source

**Q. The County is promoting treating water from Smith Lake, rather than building a reservoir and treating water from Duck River. Alabama Power owns Smith Lake dam. Will Alabama Power release water to the City/County of Cullman?**

A. Alabama Power Company has reviewed the potential water supply demand from Cullman County and indicated Smith Lake has the capacity to meet this demand.

Alabama Power Company has an established procedure for drinking water withdrawals from all their reservoirs. Many water systems in the State rely on Alabama Power Company reservoirs for their drinking water supplies. These withdrawals are governed by a contract with Alabama Power Company that is approved by the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission.

**Q. I live on Smith Lake and don't want the water level lowered. Will a new withdrawal from the lake affect lake levels?**

A. No, new withdrawal from Smith Lake will not lower lake levels any noticeable amount. Did you know, every foot of water over this 21,000 acre lake contains 6.8 billion gallons of water?

**Q. Poultry and Cattle farms are the largest industry in Cullman County. How would the Duck River reservoir plan versus the Smith Lake water treatment plan affect those key businesses?**

A. Additional water supply with water treatment sources resulting in a system with greater dependability is critical to the water sensitive poultry and cattle industries. The Smith Lake plan takes fewer years to complete and is less costly plus is centered in an area where there are greater water needs than the Duck River plan.

**Q. How much is my water bill going up?**

A. Water rates are expected to rise with either plan. However, rates are expected to be less under the Smith Lake plan because construction costs are less with less land required and no condemnation of land. Rates are established by each water system and will vary.

**Q. Why is the County recommending use of Smith Lake water when other studies point to creating a reservoir and water treatment for Duck River as the answer to meet increased water needs?**

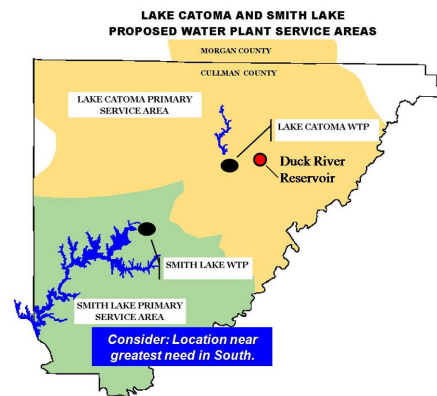
A. A lot has changed since the Duck River studies of the mid 1990's. In 1995, the projected 2055 water demands were approximately 60 million gallons per day. The most recent studies by the Utilities Board have reduced these projections to 33 million gallons per day. This change in demand coupled with the desire for multiple water treatment plants and more regional cooperation have lead to a rethinking of the water supply alternatives for the County.

In addition, landowners have contacted County Commissioners opposed to the taking of their land for a Duck River Reservoir. The County will not support condemning property when there are other very viable options for water supply and treatment.

**Q. Why do we need to change the current water supply treatment system?**

A. Dividing demands between two water treatment plants and two reliable main water sources more efficiently expands and uses existing distribution infrastructure and lowers operational costs.

Also, to better meet updated Safe Drinking Water Act standards, a Smith Lake treatment plant located where there is the greatest need for increased treated water, in the southern area of the county, decreases the time the water is in the system to better maintain water quality.



**Q. If Duck River reservoir is being built for a redundant water supply, is redundant water treatment also important?**

A. Yes, for optimum health and safety a redundant or second water treatment plant is necessary.

**Q. Is Duck River reservoir project 'shovel ready'?**

A. The term 'shovel ready' usually means that construction is ready to begin. The City has not acquired property for this project which will require family farms and others to have to sell and move. Those unwilling to sell will be forced through condemnation to give over their land.

Property acquisition takes time - perhaps a full year or more. So, while the reservoir has obtained a permit for construction from the Army Corp of Engineers, property has not yet been acquired, thus the Duck River dam site is not 'shovel ready'.

**Q. Which is the better quality water - Smith Lake or Duck River?**

A. Smith reservoir is nationally regarded as one of the cleanest lakes in America and the deepest lake in Alabama covering 21,000 acres and 500 miles of shoreline. Water quality in a Duck River reservoir is unknown.

**Q. How would Duck River reservoir opposed to Smith Lake affect individual property rights? Won't Duck River force people to sell their land? Would the City condemn some people's property to build the reservoir?**

A. Smith Lake is an already existing reservoir. Approximately 1,200 acres of land must be acquired for the construction of the Duck River reservoir which will require numerous property owners to relocate. It is likely, that the City will have to 'take' or condemn some of that property.

No property will be condemned for the Smith Lake plan.

**Q. How can you be sure Alabama Power will always supply water from Smith Lake?**

A. Withdrawals from the reservoir are governed by a contract approved by the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC). Alabama Power Company is bound by the conditions of these contracts and can not decide to disallow water withdrawals once they are approved.

**Q. Isn't it better to own your own water reservoir, rather than buy water from Smith Lake?**

A. It depends. By paying Alabama Power for water withdrawal, Alabama Power is responsible for maintenance of the lake, the dam and all the other issues associated with ownership. As long as the withdrawals are secured by a contract, ownership is not necessary.

**Q. How long will it take Duck River reservoir to supply usable water?**

A. From 7 to 9 years depending on property acquisition, construction, time for the reservoir to fill with water, and ADEM approval that the water is of a usable quality. After all this, the water must be piped to a treatment plant to be treated before use.

**Q. How does the County consider quality water delivery to people in other water systems versus water delivery to people in the city of Cullman?**

A. A Smith Lake plant significantly reduces water travel time, particularly for the southern portions of the County, which reduces disinfection byproducts (DBP) formation.

Current changes in the Safe Drinking Water Act regulations focus on disinfection byproducts (DBPs) formed in the water distribution system after water leaves the plant. The formation of DBPs is time sensitive; the longer the water is in the pipe, the greater the potential for DBP formation.

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