



Fall 2026

SLEPC Vision / Mission

The Smith Lake Environmental Preservation Committee (SLEPC) was formed in 1995 as an IRS recognized 501(c)(3) non-profit organization with the goal of preserving and enhancing the water quality of Smith Lake and its tributaries for people, recreation, fish and other wildlife through education and volunteer efforts and by working with officials and agencies and other organizations with similar goals.

Board of Directors

Theresa Johanson, President
theresa.johanson@slepc.org, (205) 915-1437
Lee Morrison, Vice President
lee.morrison@slepc.org, (205) 910-1511
Margaret Hill, Treasurer
treasurer@slepc.org, (256) 287-1332
Open, Secretary

Edwin Calvert, Board Member at Large
ed.calvert34@gmail.com, (256) 339-9869
Jerry Gray, Board Member at Large
jrgray07@gmail.com, (256) 338-4412
Benjamin Grizzell, Board Member at Large
benjamin.Grizzell@slepc.org
Stephen Morros, Board Member at Large
stephen.morros@slepc.org, (205) 939-3942

Follow Us Online

If you would like to join the SLEPC board, nominate someone for a board position, or serve on a committee, please contact us at info@slepc.org.

Website: www.slepc.org
Facebook: www.facebook.com/slepc

Save Our Lake,
Watch Your WAKE!

Annual Membership Meeting

The SLEPC Fall Membership Meeting is right around the corner! Please join us on **Saturday, October 17th** at the **Dodge City Community Center** or on **Zoom!**

Saturday, October 17, 2026 @ 9:00 am
at the Dodge City Community Center

Lower Level of Dodge City Town Hall, 130 Howard Cir., Hanceville, AL 35077

Turn at the Jack's on Hwy 69 in Dodge City - follow the blue signs.

Park in the back parking lot and enter the back doors at ground level.

~ Also online via Zoom. Register at <https://tinyurl.com/SLEPC2026> ~

For those that cannot attend the meeting in person, you can join the meeting online via Zoom. Zoom Meeting Registration information will also be sent via email and shared on the SLEPC Website and Facebook page. Please send any updates to your contact information to info@slepc.org so that you continue to receive the latest updates from SLEPC.

Topics include the "Smith Lake State of the Lake" from Alabama Water Watch and election of officers and board members, and other educational and informative items.

The Board Members of SLEPC are elected by current SLEPC members at the Annual Meeting. Board members are elected to a 2-year alternating term. The Nominating Committee recommends the following slate of candidates for the 2027-2028 term on the SLEPC Board for those with terms that are expiring:

- President – Theresa Johanson
- Secretary – Chris Grillis
- Board Member at Large – Edwin Calvert
- Board Member at Large – Stephen Morros

Invite your neighbors and friends! Everyone interested in preserving the beauty and quality of Smith Lake is invited, and your attendance is appreciated.

Refreshments will be provided courtesy of the SLEPC Board of Directors. We look forward to seeing you at the meeting - in-person or online!!



MEMBERSHIP MEETING

Saturday, October 17th @ 9:00 am
at the Dodge City Community Center

In-Person or Online

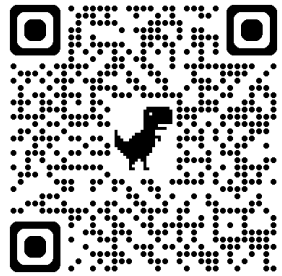
SUPPORT SLEPC

We want to hear from you! Do you have ideas about how we can get everyone more involved in SLEPC? Reach out to us on Facebook or email us at info@slepc.org. Please share your thoughts. We look forward to hearing from you and seeing you on and around the lake!

- **Maintain your membership in SLEPC!** We strive to be the eyes and ears of the lake. Together we help monitor water quality, help prevent the incursion of invasive species, host lake cleanups, and more! **Scan the QR Code** to join or renew your membership.
- **Become a certified water monitor** for SLEPC and help us monitor the water quality of Smith Lake. If you are interested in joining us as a water monitor, please contact stephen.morros@slepc.org.

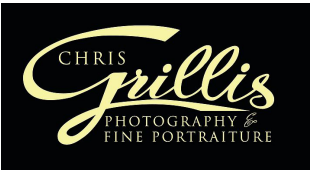
JOIN OR RENEW YOUR MEMBERSHIP

USE YOUR
PHONE TO
SCAN THE
QR CODE



Like SLEPC on Facebook and
visit our Website at www.slepc.org

PLEASE SUPPORT OUR SLEPC BUSINESS MEMBERS



SLEPC - President’s Note – Fall Newsletter 2026

Smith Lake and the people who live, work, and play on its beautiful waters just faced a significant environmental threat to the health of our lake. Alabama Department of Environmental Management (ADEM) approved an NPDES (National Pollution Discharge Elimination System) permit to a new development, Vista Lago. Fortunately, the developer of this project has listened to community concerns about the direct discharge of treated wastewater into Smith Lake and is exploring more environmentally sensitive alternatives.

While that is a hopeful outcome, this process has shed light on other issues which impact the health of Smith Lake. One, of course, is ADEM’s approval of the permit to begin with. The type of permit – an NPDES – recognizes in its name that pollution is part and parcel of the discharge. In other words, such a permit *allows* pollution to be released at the point of discharge, which in this case is Smith Lake. Why ADEM would approve such a permit into an already impaired area of the lake – impaired by mercury, but also at its limit of E. coli load – is outrageous.

But the debate around this permit raised other areas which should be of concern to those who enjoy Smith Lake and value its cleanliness, clarity, and health. **Most of these require individuals to act responsibly.**

- Septic system owners need to maintain their systems to prevent any wastewater from flowing into the lake.
- Lawn owners need to use fertilizer with no phosphorous and little to no nitrogen to keep these chemicals from washing into the lake.
- Lakeshore property owners need to have a native plant buffer along their waterfront.
- Pet owners need to pick up after their pets to keep that fecal matter from washing into the lake.
- Those who use the waters of the lake for recreational purposes – boating, fishing, swimming, etc - need to ensure they let none of their litter get into the lake.

Some require businesses to act responsibly.

- Builders and Contractors need to build with less impact on the land - clearing the minimum area needed to construct the building, using clay-rated silt fences to keep sediment runoff out of the lake, maintaining a site that keeps litter from washing into the lake, using a wastewater system which protects the lake, and leaving a natural buffer along the lakeshore.
- Landscape companies need to stop using fertilizers with phosphorous, disposing of grass clipping in the lake, and choosing non-native varieties of plants.
- Marina owners need to be vigilant in ensuring that chemicals associated with boats, like gas and oil, don’t get in the lake from their property – whether they are on water or not.
- Farmers need to make sure that their farming or livestock practices are not detrimental to the lake.
- Other businesses who rely on the lake need to take responsibility to act and use practices and products which won’t harm the lake.

These are not exhaustive lists, but examples of how individuals and businesses need to take responsibility for keeping Smith Lake clean and healthy.

And, **everyone needs to not litter**, not just those using the lake or living on the lake, but all who live within the watershed of Smith Lake. Don’t know what the watershed encompasses – look it up. It’s a large area and s**t isn’t the only thing which runs downhill, so does all that trash! Just join a lake clean-up and see. SLEPC and Renew Our Rivers holds two lake clean-ups a year – one in the Spring and one in the Fall. Help get some of that trash out of our lake. You will be amazed at all the trash which floats in our lake!

Join SLEPC and help us work towards keeping Smith Lake one of the cleanest, most beautiful lakes in Alabama. Our Annual Meeting is coming up – Saturday, October 17, 2026. Mark your calendars now! The meeting begins at 9:00am. We meet in the Dodge City Community Hall. Come have a cup of coffee and a goodie. We’ll be done before any football games get started. Hope to see you there.

For our very special Smith Lake,
Theresa Johanson
theresa.johanson@slepc.org

National Pollution Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) Permit Granted on Smith Lake

ADEM issued the first ever NPDES permit into the main body of the waters of Lewis Smith Lake at a point on the Ryan Creek branch - an already environmentally stressed waterway. In reaction to this unprecedented permit, Smith Lake Environmental Preservation Committee (SLEPC) issued the following Position Statement concerning the NPDES permit:

The Smith Lake Environmental Preservation Committee (SLEPC) opposes the direct discharge of any wastewater or effluent - whether treated or untreated - into Smith Lake.

Alternative wastewater management methods are available that would avoid direct discharge into the lake. SLEPC requests that Vista Lago pursue these alternatives to protect the water quality and environmental integrity of Smith Lake.

We encourage ADEM, Vista Lago, and elected officials to host a public meeting about this important issue.

Vista Lago’s spokesperson, Nathan Stoops, has issued a statement that due to the Smith Lake community’s concerns regarding the NPDES permit, alternative wastewater management methods were going to be considered by the developers. As of this writing, no further information has been forthcoming.

Protect Smith Lake

The Alabama Department of Environmental Management (ADEM) oversees any land disturbance of one acre or larger or if the disturbance causes a water quality violation. ADEM’s Decatur office handles this program for the Smith Lake area.

- (256) 353-1713
- <http://adem.alabama.gov/inside/contact.cnt>

Report water quality issues or concerns to ADEM

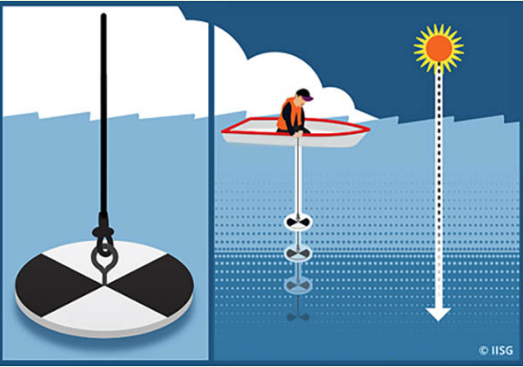
If you see **excessive muddy runoff** into the lake, notice **dead fish** on the shoreline or floating on the water (fish kill), notice **construction without a proper silt fence**, or any other concerns about degradation of the water in the lake, please take a picture, note the area on a map (GPS coordinates), and report the incident to ADEM here:

- <https://prd.adem.alabama.gov/complaints/submission.aspx>

The Disk That Makes a Difference

There are three very tangible ways in which SLEPC actively works to preserve and enhance Smith Lake – the biannual Renew Our Rivers Clean-ups, the annual Adopt-A Stream Roadside Clean-up, and Monthly Water Testing. Each of these activities is important in its own way, but **Monthly Water Testing (MWT) may be the most important** because it scientifically tests three key factors of water quality – turbidity, chemical and biological. This information is collected and shared with Alabama Water Watch as a data-driven means of keeping track of the health of Smith Lake.

Different methods are used for each factor tested. The disk that makes a difference is the Secchi Disk, a round disk roughly twelve inches in diameter which is quartered in to black and white quadrants. This disk is used to test the turbidity, or clarity, of our lake water. Turbidity basically is the ability of light to travel through water. For Smith Lake that means, how deep into the lake does sunlight reach?



Graphic Credit: Joel Davenport

The Secchi disk measures that depth to which sunlight penetrates the waters of our lake. Once the Secchi disk can no longer be seen is where sunlight no longer extends. Why is knowing the reach of sunlight into our waters important?

Beyond our enjoyment of clear, clean water in which to play, it is because sunlight is necessary for the vitality of the water, ensuring that oxygen producing plants and the other organisms necessary for healthy aquatic life, like fish and turtles, can exist. Without the penetration of the sunlight, our water becomes murky and lifeless, no longer a beautiful lake to enjoy.

For a simple and fun little video on turbidity, watch - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=k4mR6jYYT2M>