

Chamber speaker addresses lake issues

By Donna Pearce
Managing Editor

Last week's Eufaula Chamber meeting drew a large crowd, many to hear updates and to ask questions concerning Lake Eufaula.

Guest speaker, Eufaula Lake Manager Jeff Knack, spoke briefly on recovery projects and the lake levels before he took questions from the audience.

He was joined by Assistant Lake Manager Dean Roberts.

Among the recovery projects, Knack noted the work on the bridge across the dam is complete and park improvements at Dam Site South, Brooken and Porum Landing are in progress.

He said the lake was five feet below normal as of the chamber meeting date on Thursday, Feb. 17.

Knack said when the water reaches a certain level they go into a drought contingency plan where they ask Southwest Power to drop their demand.

The Tulsa District has a contract with Southwest Power, who buys water produced at several lakes including Lake Eufaula.

A lack of rainfall has resulted in the lake levels to continue dropping.

"We don't anticipate the snow melt runoff to bring the levels up any, either," Knack said.

He also talked about the normal pool level, which is 585 feet and said the Corps generates up to 587 feet in the summer, then back down to 585 in September.

Last week the Tulsa District Corps of Engineers issued a policy banning the use of submersible pumps on Lake Eufaula for the purpose of withdrawing water for individual domestic use.

In a press release from the Corps, the Tulsa District states it would no longer grant waterline licenses to individuals who use submersible pumps to withdraw water from Tulsa District projects.

Letters sent to waterline

license holders instructed them to remove all pumps and electrical components from federal property.

Several guests at the chamber meeting questioned Knack about this issue.

"To permit, we must meet the UL code. It's not settled yet," he said.

Knack explained the Tulsa District office placed the ban when they discovered that the pumps in place are not designed for use in open water and because they could cause electrocution leading to serious injury or death.

He said the Corps issued the ban per Underwriters Laboratories (UL) code, which determined placement and use of submersible pumps in environments where swimmers and waders may be present could be dangerous.

According to the news release from the Corps, licenses may still be issued to individuals who use



Photo by Donna Pearce

Jeff Knack (right), Lake Eufaula Project Office Manager, speaks to guests at last week's Eufaula Chamber meeting. Pictured are: George Ellison (left), realtor and member of the Save Our Water Board of Directors, and Rick Smenner (center), also a member of Save Our Water.

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centrifugal pumps to withdraw lake water if they have approval from the appropriate state water management agency and meet certain conditions.

Other issues discussed concerned the Least Tern nesting habitat, zebra mussels, off-road vehicles and boat ramps.

Sue Hughart, park manager at Lake Eufaula State Park, distributed Lake Eufaula postcards they designed and have for sale at the park office.

The next Eufaula Chamber membership meeting is scheduled for Thursday, March 17, at Los Arcos Mexican food restaurant in Longtown.