

# Gator Tales



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A newsletter for the citizens of the PRVWSD community

## The Pearl River Valley Water Supply District

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### 50 years on The REZ

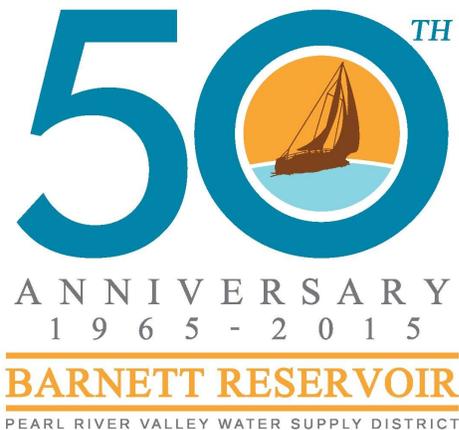


Photo courtesy: Abe Draper

Written in summation of his 1962 book, *The Pearl River Valley Reservoir Project*, years before Ross Barnett Reservoir was filled with water, James E. Sorrels' conclusion is worth reprinting now on the 50th anniversary of the lake:

*"In years hence... a beautiful dam and reservoir will stand less than a dozen miles from Jackson, Mississippi, the State's capital and largest city. Water, one of civilization's lifelines, will be abundant to meet the city's increasing needs.*

*"Boaters and water sports enthusiasts who once had to make the long trip north to Grenada and other Federally built reservoirs in North Mississippi will be within a few minutes drive of a huge recreational playground of their own creation.*

*"... New commercial enterprise should flourish and populations increase throughout Central Mississippi. All this, if it holds true, and it seems almost a certainty, will reflect the wisdom of a regional plan, which called for local citizens to invest the sum of \$22,000,000, plus amortization, in their own future."*

In its 50 years, Ross Barnett Reservoir has far exceeded Sorrels' expectations, and it has proven a worthy investment generating hundreds of million dollars a year in revenue. As amazing as it sounds, it took less than 10 years to go from the first serious discussion to having a full lake.

Though talk of the need for a reservoir, or a dependable water source for Jackson, dates back to 1926, it became a priority in the mid 50s, perhaps hastened by a scary low Pearl River flow of 49 million gallons per day in the summer of 1954, nearly leaving the city water parifiltration plant dry.

\* In 1956, the Pearl River Industrial Commission was established by a legislative act to study and plan for the development of the Pearl River basin with respect to industry, irrigation and recreational potential.

\* In 1958, the Pearl River Valley Water Supply District was formed with overwhelming support from voters in Hinds (12,877 for, 1,201 against), Leake (2,600-417), Scott (1,748-601), Madison (1,422-516) and Rankin (2,366-316) counties pushing forward with the reservoir plan.

*Continued on page two*

# News Around the REZ

## Upriver additions

A fish-cleaning station and a permanent steel storm shelter have been completed on the upper river area of Ross Barnett Reservoir, the Pearl River Valley Water Supply District has announced.

The fish-cleaning station, funded by a Sportfish Restoration grant through the Mississippi Department of Wildlife, Fisheries, and Parks, is at Leake County Water Park above the lowhead dam. It features four cleaning counters built around a sink and covered grinding device that pulverizes left over fish parts so they can be disposed of through the Park's sewer system.

There is no fee for using the station, but fishermen are asked to clean the area after use. Hoses are provided for quick cleanup.

The 20 feet by 30 feet storm shelter is located at Flag Island, the most popular sandbar and weekend gathering spot on the river. The structure is grounded and gives boaters and campers a safe haven during bad weather.

It was constructed late last fall, after first being suggested by the Upriver Advisory Committee, which includes a mix of fishermen, boaters, hunters and campers with a stake in the upper river area of Barnett Reservoir. The Upriver Advisory Committee is in its third year of working with PRVWSD board and staff. The alliance has been successful on several fronts, including new policies regarding camping and hunting, as well as addressing boating and safety issues.



Leake County Fish Cleaning Station



Flag Island storm structure

## 50 Years on The REZ *Continued from page one:*

\* Just over four years later, on July 28, 1960, a bulldozer roared to life in Rankin County and construction on the reservoir began.

\* In January of 1965 Ross Barnett Reservoir was first filled to capacity.

That's light speed for such government-related projects, but Mississippians saw the need, and the movers and shakers of the era made it happen. Their vision of the role the Reservoir would play in the future was true and the financial reward has been dramatic.

In the 50 years since, The Rez has become a vital thread in the fabric that is Central Mississippi, including providing Jackson a viable water source for perpetuity, and tax revenues for surrounding cities and counties.

The lake attracts over two million people annually for recreation, and those visitors generate nearly \$100 million in economic impact to the area.

Barnett Reservoir has become home to an estimated 13,000 residents, who live on land leased from the District.

PRVWSD general manager John Sigman may have the best description for how Ross Barnett Reservoir enriches the quality of life for Central Mississippi:

"Every morning we can see the sun rise, and at night we can see it set over a most beautiful lake. We have that right here, in Central Mississippi, at Barnett Reservoir, and it's here for all to see and enjoy."



*"Every morning we can see the sun rise, and at night we can see it set over a most beautiful lake. We have that right here, in Central Mississippi, at Barnett Reservoir, and it's here for all to see and enjoy."*

- John Sigman, GM PRVWSD



Photos courtesy: Abe Draper

## Rez angler breaks BASS tradition

It took 11 tournaments over 47 years to do it, but finally a local fisherman has won a national Bass Anglers Sportsman Society tour event on Ross Barnett Reservoir.

Gene Bishop (right) of Ridgeland won the March 12-14 BASS Central Open with a three-day catch of 55 pounds, 14 ounces. After a slow start and a 76th place position after Day 1, Bishop roared back with the event's heaviest 5-fish limit of 26 pounds, 2 ounces to take the lead Friday on Day 2, and then completed the victory with 21 pounds on Saturday.

Bishop earned a boat and motor package plus cash worth a total of just over \$48,000, and also secured a much-coveted berth in the prestigious Bassmaster Classic next February in Tulsa, Okla.

Barnett Reservoir's history with BASS dates back to the late 60s, when BASS founder Ray Scott of Montgomery first developed the plan for a national bass fishing organization and tournaments during a fishing trip to the just-opened lake. Barnett figured prominently in the early years of BASS, with annual tournaments. The organization has held a total of 11 events on Barnett, and Bishop is the first Mississippi resident and Rez regular to win.



BASS Media

## Barnett Reservoir Foundation Changes



Doug Berry, a founding member of the Barnett Reservoir Foundation, has been named Chairman of the Board of Directors of the 501(c)(3) organization that supports and promotes the Pearl River Valley Water Supply District and its community. Former chairman Buddy Medlin who had served in that capacity since the Foundation formed in 2012, and vice chairman Homer Burns recently retired from the board. Dale Shepherd is the new vice-chairman, Rayford Hudson remains treasurer and Pam Reeves was named secretary. Two new Board members, Renee Selby Deweese and Don Thompson, replaced Medlin and Burns on the 11-member Board. To learn more about the Barnett Reservoir Foundation or to become a member or sponsor, visit its website at [BarnettReservoirFoundation.org](http://BarnettReservoirFoundation.org).

## Project Rezway is April 23

Keep the Reservoir Beautiful's 4th annual Project Rezway, a fundraiser highlighted by a "recycle" fashion show, will be held at 6 p.m. April 23 at the Mississippi Crafts Center on Rice Road in Ridgeland. Tickets are \$20 for the event, which will be catered by Kathryn's Steakhouse and include music and a silent auction.

The highlight of the night will be the fashion show, which always includes designers and models of all ages. The originality is outstanding, and garments include paper, aluminum, mylar, trash bags and ... last year, one dress featured sequins made from the pull tops of hundreds of drink cans. For tickets or more information, including entering or designing for the fashion show, visit [keeptherezbeautiful.org](http://keeptherezbeautiful.org).



## Turtle Point trail opens

A new quarter-mile paved hiking path has opened at Turtle Point Nature Area Trail and Kayak Launch, located on the peninsula off Scenic Drive between the Turtle Creek and Forest Point subdivisions in Pelahatchie Bay.

Phase 2 includes additional plantings by the Keep the Reservoir Beautiful organization and Phase 3 will be the construction of a kayak launch site with a floating pier. Weather has delayed construction of the launch. Kayaking is the fastest-growing recreational use at Barnett Reservoir, and the cove at Turtle Point will provide a harbor for kayakers.

The project is 80 percent funded by a federal Recreational Trails Grant through the Mississippi Department of Wildlife, Fisheries, and Parks, with PRVWSD contributing the other 20 percent. The total amount of federal funding is \$100,000.

## SCHEDULED EVENTS

4/11	Racin' For a Seed	Fannin	Duathlon
4/18	On the Road to Health	OT	Biking
4/25	Crawfish Boil	OT	Music
5/02	Natchez Trace Century Ride	OT	Biking
5/08	Pepsi Pops	OT	MS Symphony Orchestra
5/15-16	Dragon Boat Regatta	OT	Boat Race
5/30	Gator Bait Kids	LS	Kayak Race
6/6	Heatwave Classic	OT	Triathlon
6/27	Independence Celebration	ALL	Music, Food & Fireworks
8/29	CARA	PS	Dog event
10/04	Ironman Triathlon	LS	Race
10/24-25	Smokin' on The REZ BBQ	OT	BBQ competition / live music

OT- Old Trace Park / LS—Lakeshore Park / PSP—Pelahatchie Shore Park



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## Where is it legal to fish at the REZ?

One of the most frequently asked questions PRVWSD receives is “where it is legal for me to fish on Barnett Reservoir.”

Our best simple answer: “With few exceptions, it is legal to fish just about anywhere you can get to by boat as long as you do not leave the boat to access privately held properties (including docks, boat houses, other boats and piers), and from the bank anywhere that isn’t under a privately held lease.”

Those exceptions include:

\* No fishing from the Northshore Causeway across Pelahatchie Bay, or from any dike, groin, jetty, levy or mole appurtenant thereto.

\* No fishing from any part of the spillway structure of the main dam of the Reservoir, or from a boat within the wing walls upstream or from a boat 200 feet downstream from said spillway structure.

\* No fishing with trotlines, throw lines, or set hooks and jugs in the following areas:

-- That portion of the main lake lying south of a line between the point where Twin Harbor channel enters the main lake under the Natchez Trace on the Madison County side of the Reservoir and the Fannin Landing boat launching ramp in Rankin County. The Board of Directors is expected to include all of Pelahatchie Bay in that area this year.

-- Any areas of the main lake or river within 100 yards of any sandbar or public boat launching facility.

-- Any waters within any marked navigational channel between Mississippi Highway 43 and Ratliff Ferry.

