

Gator Tales



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A newsletter for the citizens of the PRVWSD community

The Pearl River Valley Water Supply District

Pearl River Clean Sweep removes 18 tons of trash

Over 1,000 volunteers on foot, or in canoes, kayaks and powerboats removed over 18 tons of rubbish during an operation known as Pearl River Clean Sweep on Sept. 23.

The two-state sweep began at the Pearl's headwaters above Philadelphia and ended at the river's mouth in the Gulf of Mexico, with much of the work centered around the 33,000-acre Barnett Reservoir and its spillway.

"It was an amazing community event, involving at least 1,006 volunteers in two states," said Clean Sweep originator and lead organizer Abby Braman of Jackson. "The volunteers were thrilled to be making a difference in our watershed. Our final total shows 36,582 pounds of garbage removed from the river."

That doesn't include an old Jeep and a Ford Bronco, both of which were hidden in the brush and mud on a bank in Hinds County near Jackson. It does count thousands of plastic bottles, two homemade anchors, assorted car parts, miles of used monofilament fishing line and hundreds of bait boxes.

The event developed after the PRVWSD and one of its strongest support groups, Keep the Reservoir Beautiful (KRB) had reached wits end with trash at the Spillway Recreation Area, a popular spot for fishing and sightseeing below the dam. PRVWSD's Board of Directors approved a plan that would allow closing the spillway to the public if the trash problem didn't improve. Facing the loss of a popular and productive fishing hole, a handful of fishermen formed a Facebook site called Ross Barnett Reservoir Spillway Fishing Group, which quickly grew to over 2,000 members.

"We wanted to do something to get fishermen together and have a place to trade stories and photos, and at the same time get the word out that this trash situation would not be tolerated," said group leader Todd Macko of Brandon. "Then PRVWSD reached out to a group of us and started involving us in the process."



When Braman, who has a Facebook and Web page called Pearl Riverkeeper, got involved, the effort intensified and rapidly grew until she created the whole-river event. "We've already got a date for 2018 (Sept. 15) and it coincides with the International Coastal Cleanup," Braman said.

For results and photos from the different sections of the clean up, visit Braman's Riverkeeper site at <http://www.pearlriverkeeper.com/results.html>.



News Around the REZ



Hall new head of PRVWSD Board of Directors

Reservoir resident Jennifer Hall of Brandon was elected President of the Board of Directors of the Pearl River Valley Water Supply District at the panel's September meeting.

Hall, who was appointed to the board by Gov. Phil Bryant in 2016 as a representative of Rankin County, becomes the ninth President - and the first female to hold the position - since PRVWSD was formed in 1958.

"I am honored to be elected by our Board to serve as President," Hall said. "I look forward to working with the Board and staff to continue to move forward our PRVWSD."

Hall succeeds Jack Winstead, who stepped down after serving 11 years as Board President. Winstead will remain on the board.

Hall also serves as Executive Director of the Mississippi Manufactured Housing Association.

Former Board President Billy Cook of Carthage was elected Vice President, and Phillip Crosby of Leake County was reelected secretary.

The PRVWSD Board of Directors has 14 members, including two each from the counties of Hinds, Madison, Rankin, Leake and Scott. Each county's board of supervisors appoints one to the board while the Governor picks the other from a list of three nominees from the board of supervisors. The other four members represent state agencies: The Forestry Commission, the Department of Environmental Quality, the Department of Health, and the Department of Wildlife, Fisheries, and Parks.

Eight of the directors must be leaseholders that reside on PRVWSD property, including both Rankin County and both Madison County board members, plus the four members representing state agencies.



Paving of dam's upper road to start in spring

Bids are due on Nov. 1 for a project that will resurface the upper road of the Bob Anthony Parkway across the Barnett Reservoir Dam, with work projected to start in spring of 2018.

Eighty percent of the project cost will be funded by the Mississippi Department of Transportation and the Federal Highway Administration. PRVWSD will be responsible for the other 20 percent.

Construction is scheduled to begin in March and be completed by June of 2018.



B.A.S.S. returns to Barnett in March

Barnett Reservoir is back on the B.A.S.S. tournament schedule in 2018.

The 33,000-acre lake with so much history with the Bass Anglers Sportsman Society, will serve as the kickoff event for the Central Open Series. The City of Ridgeland Tourism Commission is serving as host sponsor of the tournament scheduled for March 1-3 at Madison Landing.

Barnett has been the site of 12 BASS events since 1968, including Central Opens in 2013 and 2015, and a Bassmaster Elite Series event in 2017.

Ridgeland fisherman Gene Bishop won the 2015 Central Open, also held in March, with a three-day total of 55 pounds, 14 ounces.

SCHEDULED EVENTS AT REZ

Oct. 7	Gator Bait Race	PSP	Kayak race
Oct. 8	Ryan Man	LS	Iron man competition
Nov. 18	Arts & Crafts Fair	LSP	crafts sales
Dec. 9	Gogo's Glow Run	OTP	5K fun run

OT- Old Trace Park / LS - Lakeshore Park / PSP – Pelahatchie Shore Park
SP - Spillway Road / FL - Fannin Landing / ML - Madison Landing / RR - Rankin Ramp



Nov. 18 at Lakeshore Park

The Barnett Reservoir Foundation's 4th annual Crafts Fair will be held Nov. 18 at Lakeshore Park, providing area residents an opportunity to do some early holiday shopping while having fun doing it in a great setting.

“What the show offers is a unique shopping experience, featuring local craftsmen and artists, surrounded by the view of The Rez,” said show organizer Cindy Ford. “The park has a playground for children and ample space for parking, walking and visiting with the different vendors.”

The event is free, opens 9 a.m. to 4 p.m., and will offer various types of handcrafted merchandise, including woodworking, metalworking, mosaics, painting, knitting, sewn work and up-cycled materials.

For more information, visit the Barnett Reservoir Foundation website at www.BarnettReservoirFoundation.org.

Regulation change benefits Rez deer hunters

Changes required in Barnett Reservoir deer hunting regulations to coincide with new management zones set by state wildlife officials will yield a special benefit for hunters on thousands of acres of public land around the lake northeast of Jackson.

“When we made the change, which only required a simple edit of the wording in our regulations, we decided to take it a little further and word it a way to include the special early primitive weapon season, which is not open on most other public lands,” said John Sigman, general manager of the Pearl River Valley Water Supply District (PRVWSD), the state agency that oversees the reservoir. “The proposed wording is that our seasons and bag limits will coincide with the wildlife agency's East Central Zone on private lands. The East Central's seasons and bag limits would be Barnett Reservoir's seasons and limits, and that includes the doe-only November primitive weapon season (Nov. 6-17).”

PRVWSD oversees management of about 50,000 acres of property, including about 34,000 acres under water and 6,000 acres of commercial and residential leases. That leaves about 10,000 acres of forests, much of which is open to public hunting.



Board approves spillway squirrel hunting

Acting on a request by many interested parties, the Pearl River Valley Water Supply District has opened about 500 acres below the dam and spillway to youth-oriented squirrel hunting, with no fees associated.

“It will only be open on weekends in February, after our draw archery deer hunts are completed, and then open again daily for the spring squirrel season May 15-June 1,” said Craig Hunt, PRVWSD's Director of Parks and Recreation. “Since the area is small, the Board elected not to allow squirrel dogs during the hunts.”

At least one youth, aged 15 and under, who has satisfactorily completed a hunter education course (approved by the Mississippi Department of Wildlife, Fisheries, and Parks), must be a member of each hunting party and must be under the direct supervision of at least one adult over 21, who has a valid hunting license or is exempt. All hunters must wear 500" of hunter orange.

No rifles of any type, including .22 rimfire and air-powered guns, will be allowed. Only shotguns with No. 4 shot or smaller will be allowed. Hunters must sign in and out at the deer weigh-in station at the PRVWSD shop off Spillway Road, and park only in designated areas. The daily limit and legal hours will follow statewide MDWFP regulations.



Comfort stations being added to 3 parks

PRVWSD has accepted bids and work is expected to begin this month on new comfort stations at three of its parks. The stations, which cost a total of \$377,800, will fill voids at all three locations.

Coal Bluff Campground: at the parking area adjacent to the boat launch, providing the only bathroom facility along the river between Ratliff's Ferry and Lowhead Dam.

Lakeshore Park: at the northwest corner near the lake, bringing relief to where most people go for recreation.

Old Trace Park: at the northeast end of the main parking lot, near the new playground equipment.



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Water billing system changes

Due to an excessive and growing amount of overdue water bills requiring disconnections, the Pearl River Valley Water Supply District Board of Directions approved a new billing plan **effective Jan. 1, 2018**.

Under the new guidelines, no after-hour reconnections will be done.

“We are bringing our billing in line with other utility companies in the area,” said PRVWSD general manager John Sigman. “We have a growing problem of disconnections for overdue bills, and our policy of 24-hour reconnect service will stop.”

Under the new system:

* Water/sewer bills, usually received by the first of the month, are due on receipt. The bill represents the previous month’s reading made on or about the 20th of the month (Month 1).

* An overdue notice will be sent for accounts not paid by the 20th of the following month (Month 2). A 10% penalty will be assessed at this time.

* The past due amount for Month 1, plus penalties, plus the current amount owed for Month 2 water/sewer is due by the 20th of the month (Month 3). Payment must be made with cash, certified funds or valid credit card.

* Accounts unpaid by the 20th of Month 3 will be cutoff and a \$50 reconnect fee charged to restore service.

* There will be no after-hours reconnections.

PRVWSD has done away with an additional 10 percent fee for bills not paid by the 28th of the month, and also the \$25 processing fee.