



THUNDERBIRD PROPERTY OWNERS ASSOCIATION



Photo by George Evans

Summer Newsletter 2023

PO BOX 1263 , Robbinsville, NC 28771

OFFICERS (2023 – 2025)

President.....Bette LoBue (727-519-3902)
 Betteannl@verizon.net
 Vice President...Bill Piel (305-238-7836)
 williampx@aol.com
 Secretary.....Mary Roemer (404-918-1330)
 marycroemer@gmail.com
 Treasurer.....Greg Connor (404-569-6738)
 tgconnor@yahoo.com

SANTEETLAH TOWN COUNCIL

Connie Gross, Mayor
Ralph Mitchell, Vice Mayor
Tina Emerson, Chief Finance Officer
Diana Simon, Councilwoman
Jim Hager, Councilman

NOTICE TO READERS:

Please note the correct
address for TPOA is:

TPOA

P.O. Box 1263

Robbinsville, NC 28771

This is the only address at which
membership renewals and election
ballots will be received and considered
valid. Thank you again for your
support!

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Greetings, one and all and happy summer!

How great it was to see both new and familiar faces
at our annual June Welcome Party. The food was
delicious and everyone had a wonderful time meeting
new members and seeing friends and neighbors. Our Planning
team really hit this event out of the park!



In addition to having fun, TPOA's mission is to advocate
for our homeowners when concerns arise. We have heard from
homeowners that they are very concerned about the extremely
high lake level this season, which is well above normal. While
we understand the water level is sometimes raised to prepare
for white water rafting on the Cheoah River, or to manage wa-
ter flow, lake owner-managing corporation Brookfield's water
management this summer has caused encroachment upon both
federal and private shorelines. The result has been log- and
debris-filled coves and erosion in some of the lakefront prop-
erties. This includes loss of shoreline trees, shrubbery, and
soil. One estimate for clearing out a single log- and debris-
filled cove was \$1000, the expense to be borne by the individ-
ual property owner. Our goal is to provide input and feedback
to Brookfield about these problems, so that the water levels
can be better managed next summer in accordance with FERC
regulations. TPOA would like your input and assistance in
gathering data and photographs if you have had problems. We
plan to draft a letter of request to Brookfield to help alleviate
or prevent these problems. If you have lakefront property and
are experiencing problems from the high lake levels, please
email photos to ThunderbirdPOA@gmail.com with the dates
the photos were taken. We will not share your location unless
you indicate it is okay to do so.

Another on-going concern exists at the top of the mountain,
particularly on Cheoah Trail, which still has problems getting
water when there is a power outage. TPOA has requested ac-
tion from the Town Council to address this problem. We
would hope that a solution, such as an automatic back-up gen-
erator, could be installed to insure an uninterrupted access to
the water supply for all home owners. (Continued on Page 2)



Lastly, according to our mission statement, “TPOA seeks to promote friendship among its members and good public relations for our community.” It is well to remember the quote “The Evil that men do lives after them; the good is oft interred with their bones.” [Source: Mark Anthony’s speech at the funeral of Julius Caesar in the play of the same name by William Shakespeare.] Others should not think of Lake Santeetlah as a bunch of argumentative backbiters who constantly sow seeds of discontent. So, we provided a public comment in the last town meeting that everyone needs to address each other in public with civility and respect. All homeowners should have the opportunity to make public comments in meetings without interruptions or comments unless invited. That way, we can all share our perspectives and knowledge to the betterment of our beautiful community. We would hope that inhabitants of Graham County think of people in the Town of Lake Santeetlah as generous contributors of time and money for the benefit of worthy causes, county-wide, and other community endeavors; people who care for the environment and who police our roadsides for trash; and individuals who care for and help our neighbors. This is who we are.

Sincerely,

Bette LaBue

MAYOR’S CORNER

By Connie Gross



The town staff has been busy completing the year-long project of updating the town’s financial system software. Tina Emerson, our finance officer, along with Kim and Kala our office staff, have the water billing software in place. You will now be able to track your water billing online. We will send out complete information on how to sign up.

Even with all the added unknowns involving the county-wide property assessments, it is official. We passed the TOLS budget. With the increased values balanced with a reduction in millage rates, we are keeping our taxes as low as possible. While identifying the needs of the town and using good financial sense, we adopted a capital project ordinance for further costly projects and purchases. One of the items on the list is upgrades to the water system. We are replacing two tanks that have defective bladders.

The zoning administrator, Brandon Emery, recently held a site visit to our town. Mr. Emery has offered his full report on all concerns for current building applications nearing completion. His full assessment will be available on our website and in the office. I would like to thank everyone who took part in welcoming Mr. Emery and his wife to our town. Thank you to Scott for taking him on his initial town tour. Mr. Emery stated that Scott’s knowledge and understanding of our town was amazing. In a short time, Mr. Emery was able to get an understanding of the uniqueness of our town, which will help him make good sound decisions concerning homes and property owners overall.

We are expecting a site visit from the Gold Leaf Grant committee members to look at our town for the “storm water run-off” grant that was recently applied for. A big thank you to Scott for his hard work documenting different areas of concern in the application for the grant. We hope that our grant review will be on the Gold Leaf Grant committee agenda in August. If you have any photos of backed up water after heavy rains, please share them with Town Hall.

Enjoy the summer in the mountains, and stand by for the second annual First responders/Firefighters’ fund-raiser and thank-you on August 12. My contact number is (828) 479-3637.

Tourism Development Authority

By Diana Simon

The TDA continues to embellish the front entrance landscaping. Working together to beautify the entrance garden were Kevin Haag, Becky Block, Scott Kamps, Aura Griffith, Joe Simon and yours truly.

Improvements to the front entrance have been paid for by our vacation rental guests and donations by homeowners. Due to the Town Council's decision to defund TDA, we now are limited to revenue from past renters for advertising the Town of Lake Santeetlah and for improvements to both the front entrance to Thunderbird and to Manierre Park at Chalet Village.

On June 21, the TDA held a Public Meeting at which the FY2023-24 Budget (to spend remaining funds) was approved. TDA will continue to advertise in Our State magazine if funds are available.

TDA board members are Bill Piel, Kyle Garland and me. Our board needs two additional members. Member requirements are: accept vacation home rental revenue or be involved in promotion of area tourism in Graham County. If interested, please contact me.

ADOPT-A-HIGHWAY COMMITTEE

By Beth Carlton and Kevin Haag, co-chairs

There was a record-breaking turnout for the June 13th litter pickup! Seven TPOA members gathered at Town Hall at 9:00 in the morning to vest-up, choose a grabber and head out for the road. Many, many thanks to Larry Block, Bette LoBue, Kevin Haag and his brother-in-law David Wellington, and Diana and Joe Simon for their efforts and commitment to a more beautiful Town of Lake Santeetlah.

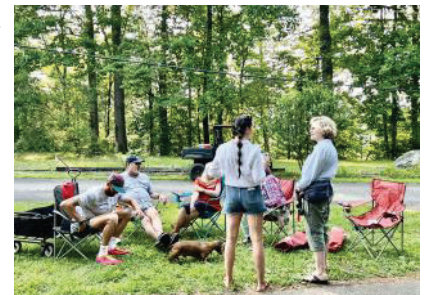
Donning those brightly colored orange vests for the July pickup were Becky Block, Diana Simon, Bette LoBue, Kevin Haag and Greg Connor. Thanks to one and all!

PLANNING COMMITTEE

By Frances Connor, Chairperson



We had a very successful Welcome Back Party on June 17th at Chalet Village. Catered by The Willow Tree, the party drew approximately fifty members and guests. The food was delicious, and many new and old friends got to enjoy the evening. We thank Bette LoBue for the use of use her car port and to the neighbors who helped set up and break down the tents and clean up!



We are very thankful to Mary Roemer for coordinating our speakers for the monthly TPOA meetings. At the July meeting we had Jared Schuster of Smokey Mountain Kayak Fishing speak to us. (See the write up later in this issue to learn more.) Please contact Mary if you have an idea for a speaker of interest to our membership.

Becky Block is finalizing the details for our Band Party. We have decided to invite the Men without Memories band this year because the band, South 129, could not perform on a Saturday night and so many of our members are weekend-only residents. Men without Memories played at the recent Cigar Box Festival in Robbinsville and was very well-received. They come from Nashville, and we look forward to having them. The date will be August 26th at Chalet Village. This party is a BYOB (blanket or chairs), and TPOA will provide hot dogs and the fixings! Remember to wear your dancing shoes!

FOCUS COMMITTEE

The Focus Committee, an standing committee appointed by the TPOA Board of Directors, seeks to keep members informed of issues effecting property owners in a timely manner, to assist in building a strong sense of community and to help protect our natural surroundings and property values. The committee is currently working with the Board of Directors in reviewing and updating our association's bylaws.

GREEN ELEPHANT REPORT

By Greg Connor, Treasurer

Thank you, TPOA members, for your generous donations to The Green Elephant Fund. Funds received to date total \$5,605.00. The Executive Board will decide in the Fall the exact recipients of the 2023 fund; if you have a suggestion, please write us at ThunderbirdPOA@gmail.com. Past recipients include Partners of Joyce Kilmer, Graham County Rescue Squad, Valley River Humane Society, Graham County Public Library, Stecoah Valley Cultural Arts Center, Meadow Branch Volunteer Fire Department, Graham County Historical Association, Meals on Wheels, Graham County Historical Association, Graham County Schools Supplies Program, Graham County Schools Knights' Pantry, Graham County Schools Caregivers, Grace Place, and the Santeetlah Voluntary Fire Department.

Our membership is at 105 as of this writing, and we thank you for your support. If you have not paid your dues for 2023, you have a new option! We have set up Venmo as a convenient way to pay. Our Venmo ID: @tpoadues. You may also pay by mail: TPOA, P.O. Box 1263, Robbinsville, NC 28771. Dues are \$20 per household. If you have any questions, call Greg Connor at 404-569-6738.



WHAT'S THE CATCH AT LAKE SANTEETLAH?

By Susan Robinson, Guest Columnist

Some of you may have heard that Lake Santeetlah is a tough lake to fish. At our July TPOA members' meeting, we heard from one fishing expert that indeed, our lake can be tricky. But he has had great success taking people out on the lake and catching fish almost 100% of the time.

What is so tough about Lake Santeetlah? Our invited speaker, Jared Schuster, founder of Smoky Mountain Kayak Fishing, offered his perspectives. First, he said, Lake Santeetlah is extremely deep compared to some lakes. As a result, one just can't rely on favorite fishing spots. Schools of bait fish move around and water temperatures vary, so one must adjust their strategies by season. In short, fishing is technical. Summer fishing is challenging because the fish are feeding on lots of tasty worms and larva in the silt, and this is hard to compete with. But in any season, one can be very successful with the right approaches at the right time in the right place – classic fishing angles!

What can you catch in the lake? As you would guess, the usual suspects: large- and small-mouth bass, spotted bass, and white bass. There are also the panfish species, which include blue gill, sunfish, crappie, and yellow perch. The ones you might not go after are catfish and the grass carp. The most prized species are trout and walleye, which are caught by trolling at proper depth and temperature.

The sustainability of fishing in Lake Santeetlah is an important topic. Jared encourages releasing trophy-sized fish back into the lake. Those are our breeders, he explained, especially walleye that may have a hard time sustaining themselves. For walleyes, he follows a rule that if they are over five pounds or thirty inches, it is good to let them go. He noted that walleye is stocked at Lake Santeetlah, but the success rate for making it to breeding maturity is estimated to be 4% or less. (Continued on Page 5)

Throughout his talk, Jared emphasized that he is a big fan of kayak fishing, or as he puts it, “going out on the water in a little plastic boat.” It’s a stealthier way to fish, while large bass boats might scare away a possible catch. All his kayaks are pedal-driven and equipped with gear and electronics to peer under the water to find the fish. While Jared originally hailed from Wisconsin, he loves Graham County and could not be happier sharing his passion for kayak fishing. [He has a pontoon boat, too.] To learn more, visit [Smoky Mountain Kayak Fishing](#).

There were plenty of tips given at the talk that we do not have space to print. But there will be additional speakers with great perspectives throughout the summer. Be sure to attend the TPOA meetings to catch it all! Members are emailed a Zoom link for the general meetings. Write ThunderbirdPOA@gmail.com to update your emails if you have not been receiving the notices. We will confirm your membership and email.

AROUND THE MOUNTAIN

By Bette LoBue

Summer really rained down on us this year! Boating, parties, picnics, and other fun gatherings were planned between raindrops and thunderstorms in June and July. But then again, that is why our mountains are so lush and green!

Our local book club’s June meeting was hosted by Diana Simon at Black Bear Court, here on Thunderbird Mountain. The meeting featured a “Jacket Reading,” where members discussed a book which they had recently read that they think might be of interest to the group. On the scene at the pot-luck luncheon and discussion were Myra Allmond of Cherokee Trail, Linda Anderson of Cross Creek, Lori Bailey of Sequoyah Trail, Anne Hager of Cherokee Lane, Sue Owens of Cherokee Trail, and Carol Raney of Cross Creek. The July meeting was hosted by Anne Hager, and again featured a pot luck luncheon. The book under discussion was *The Measure* by Nikki Erlick. Comments on the selection were mixed, but lively. Women who enjoy reading and discussing books are welcome to join in the fun!

An interesting place to visit in the area is Marie’s Lavender Farm and Gift Shop on Yellow Creek Road. A trip to the farm reveals rows of fragrant lavender, surrounded in part by bright golden sunflowers and clusters of brilliant pink blooms! On several occasions, owner Sue Huskey has hosted art classes, featuring local art instructors, at her beautiful farm. On July 11, four Thunderbird residents (Diana Simon, Julie and Kevin Haag, and yours truly) gathered up paint, brushes and canvases to participate in one of Sue’s open-air acrylic classes. Although all participants were viewing the same scene, no two paintings were alike! Julie and Kevin suggested that the Thunderbird group paint the view of Lake Santeetlah from the Haags’ deck on Cheoah Trail on top of the mountain some sunshiny day. I am in!



Getting a lot of buzz in Graham County is the instituting of the Community Garden by Graham Revitalization Economic Action Team (GREAT) executive director Michelle Shiplet, assisted in part by Pastor Eric Reese of the Robbinsville United Methodist Church and Anne Hager of Thunderbird. Several of our members are taking advantage of this worthwhile program and becoming “gentlemen” and “lady” farmers! I am hoping that some of our “farmers” will soon be sharing their surplus veggies with their Lake Santeetlah neighbors **ALL AROUND THE MOUNTAIN!**

CONDOLENCES

TPOA members offer condolences to the following families who lost loved ones recently:

Thomas Brickell and family, our neighbors on Thunderbird Trail, in the loss of his wife, Janet, on July 3

The family of Wilma Aiken, our long-time mail carrier and friend, who passed on July 7

Kim Matheson, our town administrator, who lost her mother, Willa Mae Waldrup, on July 17

Town of Lake Santeetlah
Phone: (828) 479-8190
Kim Matheson, Town Administrator
Kala Farley, Town Clerk
Scott Kamps, Public Works

If you have not yet paid your dues for 2023, please remit your check (\$20 per household) to:
TPOA P.O. Box 1263, Robbinsville, NC 28771, Attention: Greg Connor, Treasurer.
 To pay by Venmo, go to www.venmo.com to pay on-line or by mobile app.
Search for @tpoadues, send \$20 and **please note your name & address in notes.

Mailbox Dilemma

Debbie Beasley, Robbinsville Postmaster, zoomed in on the July TPOA meeting to suggest ways to help the postal service to accurately deliver mail in the Town of Lake Santeetlah. With clusters of mailboxes from the different streets in our community, it is difficult for carriers unfamiliar with the area to accurately deliver the mail.

If you put your name and street on the front of your mailbox, it would be a big help! Thank you!

LAKE CONCERNS

If you have concerns regarding Lake Santeetlah, contact Chris Glover at chris-glover@brookfieldrenewable.com. You may also call him on his cell phone (304-906-7422) or at home (304-209-5513).

Photo Gallery

