

The Origin of WATeR

The need for a watershed association that included the entire watershed of Tellico Lake was first identified and suggested by Bill Lenoir and Brian Baxter. They were instrumental in founding the Fork Creek Association to oppose a plan by Vulcan Materials to build a rock quarry in their community. Many citizens of Tellico Village rallied to support the Fork Creek Association in their opposition, and thereby created a bond of friendship and support.

In March 2000, Bill and Brian arranged a meeting with Bill and Marjorie Waldrop to propose the founding of a watershed association with an emphasis on educating and informing the public concerning practices that will protect the lake and surrounding areas. They emphasized the need for formalizing an organization dedicated to preserving and improving environmental conditions along Tellico Lake. They felt that it was more appropriate for someone in Tellico Village to take the lead for two reasons. First, they envisioned a new proactive organization not perceived as being associated with their opposition to the Vulcan quarry. Secondly, they felt that with leadership from within Tellico Village, such an organization would draw more support since Tellico Village was and would continue to be the population center of the watershed.

After some consideration, Bill Waldrop accepted the challenge when guaranteed the support of Bill and Brian. As a member of the Long Range Planning Committee for the Property Owners Association (POA) of Tellico Village, Bill prepared *A Proposal for a Lower Tellico Watershed Environmental Protection Association* that was presented to the Long Range Planning Committee for consideration. The proposal included a secondary objective of promoting cooperation and bonds between citizens of Tellico Village and neighbors in the surrounding region who have similar interests in environmental protection. After discussion, this committee forwarded this proposal to the Board of Directors of the Tellico Village POA with an endorsement and recommendation for support. In September 2000, the Board endorsed the proposal and authorized Bill Waldrop to create and chair an Ad Hoc Committee to form a watershed association that would include representatives from throughout the watershed.

The original ad hoc committee consisted of:

- Bill Waldrop of Tellico Village
- Bill Lenoir of the Fork Creek community
- Cindy Webster of Tellico Village
- Bob Edwards of Tellico Village
- Wayne Tolbert of the Glendale community
- Don Hansen of Tellico Village

It is interesting to note that five of the six members of this original committee hold Ph.D. degrees.

Creating an organization from scratch was a difficult task requiring much debate and research. In addition to the Tellico Village POA, both TVA and TDEC were very supportive. They recognized that having an organized group of citizens would help them in meeting their environmental goals and provide them with valuable input from the public. Throughout the next several months the committee met regularly to write bylaws, develop a mission statement, and select an appropriate and catchy name, preferably one related to water since that would be the primary interest. Finally, Don Hansen discovered

a way to include an e to spell water by including the small e of Tellico to provide **Watershed Association of the Tellico Reservoir (WATeR)**.

The committee also debated and addressed many administrative and legal issues for the new organization. An elected Board of Directors would govern WATeR. Programs and projects were to be administered through a committee structure with approval by the Board. Following a report and subsequent approval of the Tellico Village Board of Directors, a Board of Directors for WATeR was recruited. The original Board consisted of:

- Bill Waldrop of Tellico Village
- Bill Lenoir of the Fork Creek Community
- Gary Grove of Tellico Village
- Frank Burdick of Foothill Pointe
- Cindy Webster of Tellico Village
- Wayne Tolbert of the Glendale Community
- Gerry Zaar of Tellico Village
- Ron Potter of Tellico Village
- Jane Grinstead shortly replaced by Don Borst of Rarity Bay

The first meeting of the new Board was held on 7 March 2001 at the home of Bill and Marjorie Waldrop. The following officers were elected:

- Bill Waldrop, President
- Bill Lenoir, Vice President
- Wayne Tolbert, Secretary
- Gary Grove, Treasurer

Marjorie Waldrop volunteered to serve as media contact responsible for public relations.

One of the first items of business was to file for incorporation as a non-profit corporation. The application is dated 7 March and it was accepted on 14 March 2001 by the State of Tennessee. On 16 May, WATeR filed for 501 (c) (3) tax-exempt status with the IRS. The IRS granted this status on 3 Oct 2001.

One of the first activities sponsored by WATeR was a public meeting to help understand the current state of the environment in the watershed to help membership define where they could best contribute. WATeR organized the *State of the Lake* meeting on 22 May 2001. Representatives of the Tennessee Department of Environment & Conservation (TDEC), Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA) and Tennessee Wildlife Resource Agency (TWRA) presented data and discussed environmental issues of the watershed. They also answered questions from the approximately 140 attendees.

This highly publicized meeting introduced WATeR to the community and provided the groundwork for forming committees that soon produced such projects as the annual shoreline cleanup and building the East Lakeshore Hiking Trail. By 2002, WATeR had become a well-established organization and was recognized throughout the community and by the State and Federal agencies.

William R. Waldrop
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