

Jordan Lake resident had key role in ROR

Eleven years ago, when Alabama Power employee Gene Phifer first discussed launching a Coosa River cleanup with Alabama Power Environmental Affairs Specialist Doug Powell, Powell knew exactly who to call – Jordan Lake resident Barbara Dreyer.

"Barbara had already invented the template for what we wanted to do," Powell said. "She'd been doing it on Lake Jordan for years."

Cleanups have been held on Lake Jordan since 1991. Dreyer, who has called the lake home for more than 30 years, became chairperson in 1999. Today, her basic plan is being used across the Southeast, as Renew Our Rivers spread to four states. Dreyer was inspired to take action after her son, who lives in Georgia, told her about a lake he visited there.

"He said there were huge areas so clogged with debris you couldn't go in the water," she said. "He went another time and said they were having to use bulldozers to remove the trash along the shoreline, and the lake was almost unusable. I didn't want that to happen to Lake Jordan."

Dreyer enlisted the support of fellow lake residents and came up with the basic format, which includes identifying and assigning specific cleanup areas to each boat in advance, making sure every boat has experienced volunteers aboard and ending every cleanup with a cookout for volunteers.

"We had eight or 10 couples who lived on the lake who used to do things together," she recalled. "One day, we started talking about cleaning up the lake and it grew from there."

Renew Our Rivers Schedule

Renew Our Rivers, the nationally recognized and honored river cleanup campaign, has been interrupted at some lakes by the deadly tornado outbreak of April 27. Volunteers are advised to call event coordinators for the latest status of each remaining 2011 cleanup.

Photography by Winter Byrd



Barbara Dreyer

May 31-June 4, Bankhead Lake (Black Warrior River) - Cancelled

June 17-18, Smith Lake (Winston County)
Sites to be determined. Contact Laverne Matheson at 256-747-4422 or Linda Atkinson at 205-387-9999, Smith Lake Advocacy, or Allison Cochran at 205-489-5111, U. S. Forest Service.

Aug. 9-13, Holt Lake (Black Warrior River) - Pending
Large-item cleanup will be at various locations on the lake during the week. The community cleanup is Saturday, Aug. 13 at Rocky Branch Park in Peterson off Highway 216 from 8 a.m. to noon. A picnic lunch will follow the cleanup. Contact Kellie Johnston at 205-264-8461, Black Warrior Clean Water Partnership, or Diane Gruman at 205-553-9373. U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.

The first cleanup in 1991 involved six boats and 25 people. These days, the event attracts 250 people and more than 40 boats. This year's cleanup – held the same day as the A-Day games at the University of Alabama and Auburn University, racing at Talladega and the Riverfest in Wetumpka – still managed to attract about 200 people and 37 boats, Dreyer said.

"People enjoy doing it," Dreyer said. "You're doing something good for the lake, but there's also a lot of fun and fellowship."

Maintaining those personal relationships is also a key to volunteer turnout, she added. "If you just send out a notice, you're not going to get a major response," she said. "But if you call somebody on the phone and they commit to being there, they'll be there."

Alabama Power became involved in the Lake Jordan cleanup in 1993, Dreyer said, with Powell taking the lead for the company.

"Doug taught us a few tricks of the trade," she said. "Most of the trash in the lakes is stuff you don't see. A lot of it is back in the coves away from the houses. It gets stuck back there and you have to put on your waders and get out of the boat to get it."

Dreyer says she's pleased to have played a role in Renew Our Rivers' success. "I've always been interested in doing things if I believed in them with my whole heart," she said. "And I believe in this with my whole heart."

By Betsy Shearron

Aug. 13, Upper Tallapoosa River

Volunteers will report to Tallapoosa River Outfitters off Highway 46 near Heflin for directions to cleanups sites. Volunteers should contact Lex Brown at 256-239-6399 for arrival times.

Sept. 14-17, Village Creek - Pending

The community cleanup is Saturday, Sept. 17 from 8 a.m. until noon. Contact Mable Anderson at 205-798-0087 for locations. Sept. 16, Locust Fork (Plant Miller). Volunteers should contact Brandon Patrick at 205-288-4562, Plant Miller, for locations.

Oct. 7-8, Lake Martin (Tallapoosa River)

Volunteers will assist in a roadside and lake shoreline cleanup. Call John Thompson at 334-323-7880, Lake Martin Resource Association, for more information.

Oct. 26-29, Lake Harris (Lake Wedowee-Tallapoosa River)

The Saturday, Oct. 29 cleanup is at the Highway 48 boat ramp from 8 a.m. until noon. Contact Martin Glover at 770-445-0824, Lake Wedowee Property Owners Association, or Shelia Smith at 256-396-5093, Alabama Power.