

Source: NorthFulton.com

Forsyth giving 1071 Coalition, Lanier Association \$10K

April 15, 2009

CUMMING – Forsyth County’s Board of Commissioners voted to give \$10,000 to both the Lake Lanier Association and the 1071 Coalition for their work to make the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers keep Lake Lanier at full pool.

Commissioner Brian Tam’s motion to give both groups a \$10,000, one-time grant, was approved on a 4-0 vote in the April 7 work session. Commission Chairman Charlie Laughinghouse was absent. The vote will be ratified in the next regular meeting on the consent agenda.

Apparently this will satisfy competing requests from the two groups for county funding for lobbying efforts. Both groups are working for higher lake levels at Lanier, but in separate arenas.

“I just think this is a good investment,” Tam said. “Now is the time to get all the information possible in front of those who make the decisions so that they have no choice but to recognize what it does when that lake falls to below an unacceptable level.”

The 1071 Coalition formed just last year, is lobbying the Corps to weigh the needs of a full reservoir against the requests for continued high discharge from Alabama and Florida.

The 1071 Coalition plans to disband once the Corps has completed its new management plan for Lake Lanier. The group already has begun an economic analysis of Lake Lanier’s impact on the counties and cities surrounding the lake, the region and even the Southeast.

James McCoy, a 1071 Coalition board member and president of the Cumming-Forsyth Chamber of Commerce, said the newer group has contracted for a \$170,000 study to look at the economic impact that happens when the lake falls below 1060.

“We believe that is when the greatest negative economic impact takes place,” he said.

McCoy said it’s important to convey that Forsyth County is on board with the idea that Lake Lanier policies need to be changed.

“The chamber also believes the best way to convey that is to put some skin in the game,” McCoy said. “We have made a \$5,000 commitment to that in a challenging time.”

Lake Lanier is the greatest employer in Forsyth County, he said.

McCoy noted the Army Corps does not include anywhere in its formula the economic impact of the

lake.

The Corps looks exclusively at access to the lake for recreation, but not recreation in terms of its economic impact.

The Lake Lanier Association (LLA), in its 40th year, has the distinction of being the only non-governmental body that has legal standing in the Tri-State Water War, said Wilton Rooks, one of its vice presidents.

It is working to help convince a U.S. District judge to consider the economic impact and water needs of the county and surrounding North Georgia counties in determining the flow of water out of Buford Dam.

A legal defense fund was set up two months ago by LLA, as its regular membership fees will not cover the costs of litigation in the water wars, Rooks said.

"We have such a strong seat at the table in the legal battle, we don't want to give it up," he said.

Rooks addressed differences between the two groups.

"Like most families, siblings sometimes have friction. That doesn't prevent us from going after the same goal," he said.

McCoy added, "This is an incredible opportunity to make a strong argument that the community does matter."