

Homeowners on Lake Martin Demand Higher Water Levels

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Controversy over water levels on Lake Martin...

The Federal Energy Regulation Commission recently rejected Alabama Power's request to raise water levels at Lake Martin by three feet and expand the time the water is raised.

Tonight, they held a public meeting where some residents spoke out against the commission's ruling. Hundreds of people who live or vacation on Lake Martin showed up here, most of them to support Alabama Power's proposal to raise water levels on the lake.

It was a packed house as people from Elmore, Tallapoosa, and Coosa Counties gathered to discuss Lake Martin's water levels. The lake is currently lowered ten feet in the winter, beginning October 1st but now some say the lake should only be lowered seven feet and done so later, on October 15th.

"I think it definitely needs to be raised and the full pool needs to be lengthened in the fall and spring," says homeowner Judy Heinzen.

"We've got a lot of people whose docks are out of the water at the ten feet down level but at seven feet, they can use it," explains Jesse Cunningham.

Alabama Power drafted the proposal to elevate Lake Martin for a longer period and a spokesman for the power company tells us they want the Federal Energy Regulation Commission to reverse their ruling. Brandon Glover with Alabama Power says the goal is to "show them that there is value in that three feet and that there was a lot of consideration by us and all the stakeholders that were involved."

But not everyone wants to see the waters rising. Stephen Bowler, with the commission, tells us farmers on the lake say the higher levels aren't good for business.

"There were folks downstream in which flooding would be increased by the proposal and because of public safety concerns, with the information we had, we couldn't go with the recommendation to raise the winter pool

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Still, some say there are more pros to raising the water level than cons.

"It helps the economy of the local businesses and it helps the tax revenue because property values go up," says Cunningham.

"If you can't drop a ski in front of your place in the wintertime, it's not good if you can't ski out there," says homeowner Ron Sappington.

When the Federal Energy Regulation Commission makes changes to lake levels, they last anywhere from 30 to 50 years