



**US Army Corps  
of Engineers®  
Nashville District**

# Center Hill Lake

## Lake Casts



**Fall/Winter  
2006**

### Cutting, Damaging, or Destroying Trees on U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Property is a Federal Crime

Trees and vegetation on publicly owned lands surrounding Center Hill Lake are being severely damaged, cut, or destroyed by individuals who own private land adjacent to public property. In some cases, trees located on adjacent privately-owned lands are being cut and allowed to fall onto trees on public lands, resulting in damage that often proves fatal to those trees. However, in most recent cases, adjacent property owners are knowingly crossing from their adjacent private property onto public property and destroying or severely damaging trees and other types of vegetation on public property to create a view of the lake from their private residences or to extend their lawns.

Cutting of trees or the damage or removal of any vegetation for any purpose, including timber harvesting, creating views of the lake, pruning, landscaping, mowing or underbrushing is a federal crime and is punishable under the provisions of Title 36 Code of Federal Regulations, Part 327. Any person who violates the provisions of Title 36, CFR, Part 327, may be punished by a fine of not more than \$5,000 or imprisonment for not more than six months or both, and may be tried and sentenced in accordance with the provisions of Title 18, United States Code, Section 3401.

Primarily due to the outstanding environmental quality and aesthetics of Center Hill Lake and the pristine forested shoreline, the lake and the surrounding public property are well known to a diverse group of outdoor recreationists and attract more than three million visitors annually

from Tennessee and surrounding states. The 18,000-acre lake and the 415 miles of beautiful forested shoreline adjacent to the approximately 20,000 acres of public lands draw those visitors and prompt them to add more than \$94 million to the local economy as they pursue outdoor recreational activities such as wildlife viewing and photography, boating, fishing, camping, picnicking, hiking, or just simply sight-seeing.

The vast majority of the forested hillsides, including the privately owned lands adjacent to the public shoreline, once stretched unbroken the entire 64-mile length of the lake from Center Hill Dam to its headwaters near Great Falls Dam. This natural primitive landscape of trees and wildlife is rapidly disappearing and being replaced with development that includes individual cabins and sub-divided neighborhood complexes of homes and streets.

The relentless pressures of this residential development adjacent to public lands surrounding Center Hill Lake is resulting in a significant increase in the number of newly discovered cases of damage and destruction of trees and vegetation on public lands. It appears that some adjacent lakeshore residents are willing to damage or destroy public property for personal financial gain and/or to obtain improvements to their personal property in the form of lake views and vistas for their homes.

Actions by property owners adjacent to public land that involve the destruction of the environmental features of the lake and surrounding forested shoreline also create potentially severe erosion problems. The presence of the natural shoreline is necessary to maintain the water quality of Center Hill Lake. Natural vegetation along the shoreline acts as a buffer and helps to purify run-off water and control erosion along the steep hillsides. The cities of Cookeville and Smithville both depend on Center Hill Lake for their drinking water.

Individuals who illegally cut trees and vegetation in this important and sensitive “buffer zone” on public property are committing federal criminal acts of vandalism. It is the Corps’ goal to maintain and preserve the outstanding features of Center Hill Lake for the full benefit of the general public and future generations of Americans. Replacement of 100-year-old trees along the boundary line is far more difficult than repairing a vandalized restroom door at a park recreation area or a picnic table at a campsite. These violators are doing more than simply destroying government property - they are stealing. They are stealing from their neighbors, friends, and visitors to the lake by removing the picturesque and remote quality that attracts many varied users to Center Hill Lake.

In the past several years, the Corps has worked closely with violators to either restore the damaged areas or to collect the monetary value of the damages and utilize the money to enhance or protect the natural resources at the lake without fully prosecuting the violators through the federal court system. However, a more effective approach is necessary to deter the rash of acts of vandalism and to ensure the long-term environmental quality of the lake and surrounding shoreline. For this reason, all future acts of vandalism will be investigated and all findings will be turned over to the United States Attorney's Office for prospective prosecution through the federal criminal court system. The Resource Manager and Park Rangers have identified this as a high priority and are working diligently to locate, investigate and consider federal prosecution in all cases of destruction of public property.

During recent investigations of tree vandalism cases, violators have provided false statements concerning the facts of the cases to Park Rangers. Providing false statements to federal officers is also a federal crime. Any person who provides a false statement to a federal officer is subject to prosecution under Title 18, United States Code, Section 1001.

Local residents can help stop this degradation of our lake scenery. Although the Corps is making every effort to locate and take the appropriate action against offenders, our most important asset could be the eyes and ears of the general public. Community members are invited to help protect this important natural resource and provide timely assistance by calling the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Resource Manager’s Office at Center Hill Lake if they hear a chainsaw or bulldozer at work in an area they believe is government property.

Reporting violations such as dumping of trash, release of sewage and human wastes (treated or untreated) from boats, or the construction of unauthorized roadways onto government property is also strongly encouraged. The identity of all individuals that report unauthorized activities will be kept confidential or anonymous, and all reported violations will be investigated.

Anyone who observes or has knowledge of theft, vandalism, or any other threat or suspicious activity against Corps property is also encouraged to participate in the “Corps Watch” program, which is a nationwide crime-watch program developed to protect Corps of Engineers property. Each year, millions of dollars are lost due to property damage from vandalism, larceny, arson, and environmental and cultural resource degradation. This program is designed to heighten public awareness of the seriousness of the impacts of crime within or around dams, lakes, locks, recreation areas, and other Corps of Engineers property and facilities.

Authorized by Section 205 of the Water Resource Development Act of 2000 and the Economy Act (31 U.S.C. 1535), national funding is available to issue rewards of up to \$1,000 to individuals for information leading to the arrest and prosecution of offenders. “Corps Watch” uses a 24-hour-a-day toll free hotline that assures the identity of the caller is protected and the proper authorities are notified. To report theft, vandalism, or any threat or suspicious activity against Corps property, please call the “Corps Watch” hotline at 1-866-413-7970.

You can help protect the rolling hills above Center Hill Lake as an unspoiled, natural, and timeless beauty. Please call the Center Hill Lake Resource Manager's Office at (931) 858-3125 or (615) 548-4521, Monday - Friday, 7:00 am to 4:00 pm, CST for additional information or to learn how you can help protect the outstanding environmental quality of the land and water resources at Center Hill Lake. As always, your help with our efforts to better manage these resources is greatly appreciated.

### **Center Hill Lake Website**

Have a question about Center Hill Lake? You can obtain information regarding a wide variety of topics relating to the lake at:

<http://www.lrn.usace.army.mil/op/cen/rec/>

Information on shoreline management, fishing, camping, and boating is offered. Take a look for yourself, it will become a favorite!



### **Meet the Staff**

If you're a newcomer to Center Hill Lake, or if it has just been a while since you have had the need to contact us, you may not be familiar with the Corps employees who work in the Resource Manager's Office.

The Center Hill Lake Resource staff is available to assist you in any way we can. In an effort to better serve your needs, the lake is divided into five areas of responsibility. Each area is assigned to a Ranger. The assignments are as follows:

**Tim Dunn** – Resource Manager

**Ranger Terry Martin** –(Area 1)Left descending bank beginning at Casey Cove in Holmes Creek to the dam, including tail-water area.

**Ranger Stephen Beason** –(Area 2)

Right descending bank from Hurricane Bridge Recreation Area to the dam.

**Ranger Scott Fanning** –(Area 3)

Right descending bank from Hwy. 70 bridge to Hwy. 56 bridge.

**Ranger Gary Bruce** – (Area 4)

Great Falls Dam to Hwy. 70 bridge.

**Ranger Mike Adcock** – (Area 5)

Left descending bank from Hwy. 70 bridge to head of Casey Cove in Holmes Creek .



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[www.lrn.usace.army.mil/op/cen/rec](http://www.lrn.usace.army.mil/op/cen/rec)**