

LEESVILLE AND SMITH MOUNTAIN LAKES

History of the Area

The land in the Smith Mountain vicinity is steeped in history, and the river on which the dams and lakes are located has played a major role in it. Years ago, members of the Algonquin tribe migrated south from Canada into North Carolina, settling the Roanoke River along the way. They found a good place to fish and hunt. Settlers arriving after the Indians found it so, too. First to enter the area, John Lederer, wrote in 1670, as did others who followed, of an infinite quantity of animals to hunt, of the low and very rich ground, of large meadows and savannahs. A great migration to the area began in 1730. The Virginia Assembly promised ten tax-free years to those who would settle along the river, and naturalization for aliens. Two of these settlers, Daniel and Gideon Smith, arrived in 1740 and are forever remembered by the mountain named for their family.

During the years the river has been called several names, from Moratuck in the 17th Century to the present official dual name, Roanoke (Staunton) River, from the point where Franklin, Bedford and Roanoke Counties meet, downstream to the John H. Kerr Dam on the North Carolina border. The name "Roanoke" is said to have originated from an Algonquin word for shell "money." The name Staunton comes from Captain Henry Staunton who, before the Revolutionary War, commanded a company of soldiers to protect early settlers from Indian attacks. The soldiers patrolled from the mountains to the mouth of the Dan River.

Appalachian Power Company and its predecessor companies were interested in the gap in Smith Mountain as the site of a hydroelectric project as far back as 1924, but until pumped storage became feasible it would not be economically justified. Construction of the Smith Mountain Development began in 1960. Smith Mountain is the first Appalachian project to utilize the pumped storage concept. In pumped storage, water does double duty. It passes from the upper lake through turbines of Smith Mountain Dam into the lower lake. Some of this water passes through the turbines of the lower dam at

Leesville, but a portion is retained in the lower lake. Then at night, weekends or whenever demand for power is low, three of the turbines in the upper dam are reversed to act as pumps to draw water from the lower lake back into the upper lake to be used again.

Facts and Figures

Smith Mountain Dam

Height from riverbed	227 feet
Length	816 feet
Height of spillway	210 feet
Type of construction	Concrete Arch

Leesville Dam

Height from riverbed	90 feet
Length	920 feet
Type of construction	Concrete Gravity

Smith Mountain Lake

Length of lake	40 miles
Storage (approx.)	1,100,000 acre-feet
Area (approx.)	20,000 acres
Shoreline	500 miles

Leesville Lake

Length of lake	17 miles
Storage (approx.)	110,000 acre-feet
Area (approx.)	3,400 acres
Shoreline	100 miles

The Power Plants

The Smith Mountain Dam employs five generating units. Of those five, two are conventional generators while the other three are reversible pump/turbines. The Leesville Dam employs two conventional generators. The Smith Mountain project currently has a combined installed capacity of 636 megawatts.

Recreation

Water and outdoor enthusiast of all kinds—boaters, skiers, fishermen, swimmers, campers, hunters, nature lovers—find Smith Mountain and Leesville Lakes a wonderland of enjoyment. A continuous program of stocking the lakes with millions of game fish is maintained by the Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries. The lakes have been called one of the best fishing spots in the eastern part of the nation.

Appalachian Power Company has established picnic areas at both Smith Mountain and Leesville Dams, which are open to the public. They feature shelters, tables, fireplaces, comfort stations and fountains. Appalachian has also developed a public information center at the Smith Mountain Dam. Other recreational facilities and opportunities are available on the lakes, the largest inland water recreation project located solely in Virginia.

Preservation

"Cleanliness is next to Godliness" is an axiom completely endorsed by the public officials, property owners and visitors to the region. State statutes prohibit littering or dumping trash, etc. on the highway, right of way or public property and prescribe severe penalties for the offender. Similarly, when on your boating or fishing trip, do not throw sewage, garbage or trash of any kind in the water. If receptacles are not furnished, take it with you and dispose of it legally and sensibly when you return to shore. You are asked to report flagrant violation of the pollution laws to the closest health department and/or the sheriff.