

H. Lynn Phillips, P.E.
135 Southlake Ln
Hoover, AL 35244
hlynnp16@gmail.com

October 30, 2017

Mr. DeJarvis Leonard, P.E. Region Engineer
Alabama Department of Transportation – East Central Region
P.O. Box 2745
Birmingham, AL 35202-2745
Attn: Mrs. Sandra F. P. Bonner

**RE: Project Number: ACAA59534-ATRP(015)
CR-1396 (Cahaba Beach Road), Extension from CR-346 (Swan Drive) to CR-60 (Sicard Hollow Road) – Including a
Bridge over the Little Cahaba River**

Dear Mr. Leonard,

Prior to the recent public meeting about the above project I wrote to you requesting that the road improvements not be built to protect the watershed of Lake Purdy, the major water supply of the Birmingham Water Works Board (BWWB). At the time I wrote the letter, I assumed that BWWB would be the most vocal advocate of limited or no development in the water shed, particularly on the land they own. Since then I've observed that that is not the case which is surprising given the history of the lake and development in the Birmingham area. Because of that, I'm now writing you a letter that the BWWB Chief Engineer should be writing you.

The Lake Purdy Dam on the Little Cahaba River was built in 1909 by the Birmingham Water Works. It was named for W. H. H. Purdy, an engineer and general manager of the Municipal Management Company of Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, which operated the Birmingham Water Works under contract. The dam was raised by 20 feet in 1929, creating the present 1,00-acre Lake Purdy reservoir just above the confluence of the Little Cahaba and the Cahaba River. Water released from the reservoir's spillway proceeds into the Cahaba where it is taken up by the Water Works' Cahaba Pumping Station. It is a source of drinking water for 600,000 customers in the Birmingham area. (Birmingham Wiki, October 2017)

As a young engineer, I had the good fortune of working as the Operations Engineer for a municipal water utility in East Tennessee. I say good fortune because the City Engineer (and my boss) was James Goforth. During the 1960s and 70s Jim was the Chief Engineer for the Clinchfield Railroad. The Clinchfield penetrated the most rugged mountains in the eastern United States. In only 277 miles it operated in five states, crossed four mountain ranges and five major water sheds. It was built in the early 1900s to construction standards unheard of at the time such that there was no need to upgrade it's bridges and tunnels to handle modern traffic. The builder of the railroad was George L. Carter who had learned his trade building the transcontinental railroad. George Carter was a clearly a remarkable man and Jim Goforth also had the good fortune to work for George and hear first-hand about the men who built the Clinchfield. Jim described them as men of pride, loyalty, dedication and purpose.

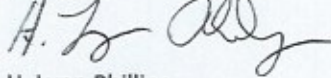
One of the things that Jim learned from George Carter was that the construction in the five water sheds that the RR crossed deprived many communities of their drinking water supplies because they were spoiled by the construction and following RR activity. The RR did not realize this until construction was nearly complete and the damage being done. Understanding this George Carter took active steps to encourage cities and towns to purchase unspoiled water sheds along the RR route to ensure clean water for future generations. One of these water sheds provided water for the water utility that Jim and I worked for. Recognizing the value of these 3500 acres and the need to keep it undisturbed, Jim would hike the area at least once a month to look for unauthorized logging or road construction. When I stated work for the City one of my duties was to go on these hikes with Jim and follow-up on any problems we found. The best thing about the hikes for me was hearing Jim's stories about the building

of the Clinchfield and the development of the City water supply in the early 1900s. I also learned first-hand how quickly raw water quality could degrade even after the most minor land disturbance in the water shed.

The building of the Clinchfield has nothing to do with the Lake Purdy and the Birmingham water supply but similar forces were at work in the Birmingham area at the beginning of the 20th century. In 1909 Birmingham was one of the largest producers of steel and cast iron in the United States. This development negatively impacted the Warrior River and Village Creek which would have been the obvious water supply sources at the time. As in East Tennessee, civic minded men like W. H. H. Purdy sought to develop a safe water supply which included public ownership of the Lake Purdy and its water shed. The control of development in the water shed was and is a key ingredient in maintaining a public water supply. The proposed CR-1396 construction clearly goes against this philosophy of public water supply system protection. We owe it to our children and our children's children to preserve the untouched areas of our region like Lake Purdy, for they constitute the first and most important element in the conservation of the natural resources that have been passed on to us. Please remember this as you make the important decision about CR-1396.

"Leave it as it is. The ages have been at work on it and man can only mar it.", Theodore Roosevelt.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "H. Lynn Phillips".

H. Lynn Phillips

Cc Cahaba River Society