

*Mission: to unite as citizens and actively engage in the preservation of the Spring Creek Watershed*

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**Spring Creek Coalition**  
**2434 East 56 Place**  
**Tulsa, Oklahoma 74105**

## Spring Creek Watershed Landowners

### Spring 2018 Newsletter



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THE MOST PRISTINE  
LARGE OZARK STREAM  
IN OKLAHOMA  
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## Thomas Jack Alexander, Friend of the Coalition

**August 15, 1957-February 11, 2018**



Thomas Jack Alexander, 60, died Sunday, February 11, 2018, in Owasso, OK. Tom was a good man and a good friend of the Coalition.

Through his environmental firm, Alexander Consulting Inc., Tom donated over \$3,000 of pro bono work helping SCC understand the impact of water withdrawal from the Spring Creek watershed by Peggs Water Company. While serving on the board in 2014-2015, Tom mentored Holland Hall student and board member Emily Hyde who went on to major in Water Resources at OSU. In May, 2014, Tom took the first steps in creating a chemical baseline of data for Spring Creek. He and assistant Emily Hyde sampled three locations capturing data such as pH, salinity, chloride, and phosphorous to determine if pollutants were being introduced by the city of Oaks or tributaries such as Snake Creek. Results were good. No pollutants were found. Tom will be missed.

### **GRDA Pensacola Dam Tour** **Saturday, April 14, 9:30am** **Ecosystems & Education Center** **420 Hwy 28, Langley, OK**

When the calendar reaches late May and the country celebrates Memorial Day weekend, the Grand River Dam Authority begins something very special at historic Pensacola Dam in Langley.

That holiday weekend marks the beginning of the free tours of the dam, which originate at the GRDA Ecosystems and Education Center and

allow guests to get an up-close look at Oklahoma's first hydroelectric facility.

But we have something even more special for you: a private, off-season tour of the Pensacola Dam just for Spring Creek Coalition.

While many enjoy the waters of Grand Lake, a tour of the dam is an opportunity to see what's holding up all that water, and how it got started. In the summer of 1940, as construction crews were nearing completion on the massive mile-long dam that crosses the Grand River Valley between the communities of Disney and Langley, the lake began to fill. Ever since, Pensacola has held back the 46,500 surface acres of water that support a thriving recreational and tourism industry in Northeast Oklahoma that also spills over into the surrounding states.

The interior of the dam still appears much as it did in 1940, which is one of the reasons it was added to the National Register of Historic Places in



September 2003. On our guided tour, we will watch a short video detailing the construction of the dam as well as the beginnings of GRDA and its operations today. After that, the tour will proceed to the powerhouse, accessed via elevator from above, and we will see the six hydroelectric turbine generators in operation.

Inside that powerhouse, GRDA still produces renewable electricity, just as it has for over seven decades, by harnessing the flowing waters of the Grand River. The six hydroelectric turbine generators located there have the combined capacity to produce approximately 120 megawatts of electricity for GRDA customers in Oklahoma.

## Pensacola Dam Tour

"I enjoy this tour so much that I've gone more than once," notes SCC member Dave Jones. "And I'll go again. There's a lot of history in building the dam and how they did it, its importance during World War II. Especially with the relationship between SCC and the GRDA, I think this will be a super outing."

### Requirements:

- Every individual 18 years of age and older must present a valid driver's license, state issued ID card or International Visa to tour the dam.
- No children under the age of 5.
- No bags or purses but can bring phones, cameras, water.
- Tour includes an elevator and a flight of stairs. It will take approximately 1 hour.

**Carpool or Meet On-site:** We will meet at the Peggs Community Building at 8:15 AM to drive the 35 miles to the Pensacola Dam. You can also choose to meet us at the Ecosystem Center in Langley (420 Hwy 28, Langley, OK) at 9:15am.

Please give Jessica Spencer, SCC Trip Leader, a call and let her know you are coming, (918) 822-0968.

## PWC Secondary Water Source Process Slow but Still on Track

For thirteen years Peggs Water Company (PWC) has been working with seven other entities to secure a secondary water source called the Tenkiller Utility Authority or TUA.

"I am really anxious to get this project moving forward," notes PWC manager Robin Culie. "Our main hold up has been DEQ. Each time we have submitted our engineering design re-

## PWC Secondary Source

ports to DEQ they have come back with minor deficiencies that we fix and then resubmit the plan. We recently submitted our fourth report, and it is 2 ½" thick. DEQ has stated they'll give us their response within 30 days which will be early March."

Once DEQ signs off on the design plans, everything else is ready to fall into place. Construction plans will be submitted to DEQ. Once approved, there will be a 30-day period for public hearings, and final funding percentages will be determined by the USDA Rural Development agency.



PWC pump on bank of Spring Creek

"Everything is lined up and ready to go," says Culie. "The Cherokee Nation and the Commissioners are behind us. Rural Development wants us to succeed. This is a pilot program for them on how to unite water districts. This is the first time in Oklahoma that this many entities (7) have gotten together to build a project of this size."

In the best case scenario, the TUA project could have bids out for construction by mid-fall. But you can't hurry government, notes Culie. The time frame is very difficult to estimate.

"We really need to get this thing going. It will relieve stress on our system, provide a backup source when we have power outages, and keep us from having to expand our plant."

PWC currently pumps an average of 5.2 million gallons a month from a spring on the banks of Spring Creek about a half mile upstream from the low water

## Spavinaw Creek

crossing at Cave Springs/Littlefield's. Once TUA comes online, PWC is obligated to buy 2.7 million gallons of water from them each month. This will have the immediate effect of decreasing by half the amount of water being removed from the Spring Creek watershed.

## Trout in Spavinaw Creek

The Spring Creek Coalition board became aware last summer that the Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation (ODWC) has been asked for a permit to allow trout stocking in Spavinaw Creek. The board believes that ODWC should deny this permit. Here are a few of our reasons:

The introduction of any non-native species into streams such as Spavinaw Creek includes risks that should not be taken and sets a harmful precedent. Introducing non-native species into an environment has been shown time and time again to be a bad idea, e.g., carp, kudzu, zebra mussels, sericea lespedeza, starlings.

We know ODWC is proposing a five year study on the impact of introducing trout in Spavinaw Creek before issuing a definitive permit. At first, this sounds reasonable. But even such a study has issues. For example, there are too many variables. How extensive can the study be? How does one know all the elements that need to be looked at? ODWC might study the impact of trout on natives such as smallmouth bass. But what about their impact on snails, other invertebrates, eelgrass, Oklahoma salamanders, or the many nongame fish species?

The study will be harmful in and of itself. In order to do a five year study, ODWC must stock trout in Spavinaw Creek. No matter the results of the study, ODWC will have disrupted the ecological fabric, as well as diverted scarce research funds and human effort from more worthy conservation priorities.

## Annual Meeting

These are just a few of the points that the SCC Board addressed in a letter sent to J. D. Strong, Director, ODWC, and others.

Kelly Bostian notes in his January 24 Tulsa World article, "Rainbow trout keep anglers happy and draw tourism dollars, but debate continues over whether the fish are the right choice for every stream in Oklahoma."

Your board believes they are NOT the right choice for our Ozark streams.

ODWC and all Oklahomans should appreciate our quality streams such as Spavinaw Creek for what they are, for their value to Oklahoma now and in the future. We should do whatever we can to protect these waters; we should not do anything that puts them at risk. Once they are changed, it can be impossible to go back.

We also realize that we represent a diverse population. Some of you may have different views and we welcome hearing from you.

If you would like to become active in this issue, there is a group called "Keep Spavinaw Pure". Contact them at (918) 637-1449.



Lots of folks and fun at our January Annual Meeting (Kids Zone: Critters of the Creek)