

# Lake James

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wouldn't want somebody telling me what to do with my land. You might slow it down a little, but you're not going to stop it."

Charles Alvin Smith, manager of Mimosa Fishing Club, also had mixed feelings about the changing shoreline.

"It's changed a lot," he said. "It's probably going to change a lot more. When they get all those houses built, it's going to be a lot busier. It will probably be good for us, but it's probably going to be bad for the individuals going camping. People are worried they won't be able to use the lake, that they'll be run off."

According to Branch, local officials should try to find a way to keep housing construction at a minimum and instead focus more on

the lake's natural beauty as an inducement to tourism.

"It's better to have 100,000 new visitors than 20,000 new residents," she said. "Tourists come and spend money and then leave. Residents use more of the government resources. If it's just houses, I think that will hurt us. Our lake has been noted as one of the cleanest in the state. I think we need to stick with our uniqueness."

Certain types of tourism-related development would be a plus — like a lodge or inn, golf course or cabins — things that would attract more tourists but preserve the shoreline, Branch said.

"We've had a lot of inquiries about an inn or lodge," she said. "That kind of development would preserve the beauty of the lake and allow people to come and enjoy it

but then go home."

The tourism-vs.-development debate aside, the lake directly or indirectly already has a major economic impact in the form of tax revenues. According to Burke tax records, Crescent Resources and a subsidiary, Carolina Centers, LLC, own 30,841 acres in the county, much of it around the lake, with a tax value of \$44,675,173. The companies pay an annual tax bill of \$263,583.

In addition, Duke Energy owns property in Burke valued at \$48,582,521 and pays a \$286,637 annual tax bill.

All told, Duke and its land-holding subsidiaries own property valued at \$93,257,694 and pay \$550,220 in taxes, making the Duke family of companies easily the largest taxpayer in the county.