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### **Sinclair Reflection**

The tragedy of the commons states that as increased populations visit natural areas of interest the values, that visitors seek, in these natural setting begin to steadily erode. Friday we spent all afternoon clearing debris from the various islands and inlets on lake Sinclair. Some of the areas were more littered than others, but it goes to show the lack of respect visitors to the lake enact. Now it might not be their lack of respect, but maybe their lack of awareness they possess of their effect on the lake.

So what do we do? The tragedy of the commons throws out a few ideas. Selling off sections of the land for private ownership. But how would this work on the lake? Keeping it public but allocating the right to enter. On lake Sinclair this may look like, limiting the number of visitors allowed on the lake daily by purchasing day passes in advance. But how would the allocating rights work? As an outdoor educator I do not want to limit the usage of the lake only to certain individuals that would be no fun for anyone.

What Georgia Power is doing with their Rivers Alive program is one of the best ways in my opinion to raise awareness of the effects visitors are leaving on the lake. But it is true. The natural values that lake Sinclair has to offer are naturally eroding. As the recreational population, on the lake, increases summer after summer so does the trash and waste. Which in return decreases the actual value of the lake.

The every increasing population on lake Sinclair seeks out the lake for their own personal enjoyment. Whether it is skiing, drinking, or just to have fun these visitors leave a toll on the lake. After a day of clearing trash on the lake, the most prominent item that I continually picked up was glass beer bottles. Visitors come to the lake; drink beer, enjoy themselves, then toss their bottles into the water not thinking it is a big deal. In return the lake soon becomes a wasteland. For the population that comes to the lake to actually enjoy what the lake has to offer and its real value, their realities are crushed.

So again what do we do, how do we combat the effects of others? Partnering with Georgia Power to raise awareness is a great place to start. A few other ideas I have are to place trash liners at public boat ramps for visitors to take out on the lake with them. Or for visitors to collect trash they happen upon while enjoying their lake experience. Also placing recycling stations at the boat ramps for visitors to dispose of trash after a day on the lake. Maybe authorities cracking down on visitors with fines for unlawful recycling of waste would counter visitors thoughts before they throw their next glass bottle into the water. All of the thoughts may be good, but as an outdoor educator it really boils down to how do we raise awareness to these visitors to promote the well-being and natural value of the lake. Without preservation we may not have a lake to enjoy for much longer.

As an outdoor educator it is my duty to raise awareness to this everlasting issue, and as much as possible to be a good steward of any natural setting outdoor educators may use a classroom, or just a recreational site they visit.