

APPENDIX C SCENIC CHARACTERISTICS, GUNTERSVILLE RESERVOIR

Beginning at Guntersville Dam (TRM 349), the first 6 miles of shoreline upstream are almost completely natural and include several attractive coves. Scenic bluffs occur on the north side of the reservoir for the first 4 miles and on the south side for the next 2 miles. Moderate to steep wooded hillsides 400-foot-high rise above the bluffs and line the remaining shoreline. They also extend about 2 miles past Goat Island (TRM 352) and a Small Wild Area (SWA) into the Honeycomb Creek embayment. The scenic value of this section is excellent and scenic integrity is high. Honeycomb Campground is visible along the west bank in the middle portion of Honeycomb Creek embayment. Further upstream, U.S. Highway 431 crosses the embayment and can be seen along the right bank. Private boathouses and water-use facilities are visible on the opposite side. The recent four-lane improvements to U.S. Highway 431 have added large, cleared road cuts and riprap areas to the shoreline views along the embayment. Scenic value in this area is fair, and scenic integrity is low.

Conners Island peninsula (TRM 356), located east across the reservoir from Street Bluff, is among the most exceptional scenic areas on the reservoir. This undeveloped peninsula is dissected with a number of coves and has a low, wooded ridge along the west side. A mix of open meadows and woodland cover the gently sloping land. The surrounding expanse of open water is accented with 16 islands of various shapes and sizes, primarily covered with tall mature pines. The islands are arranged in a crescent-shaped group totaling more than 86 acres with the largest one being about 27 acres. Foreground and middle ground views of the islands are outstanding from any direction. Looking northwest from the city of Guntersville, the islands are in the foreground, and wooded ridges 400-500-foot-high are visible in the background. Looking west from Houston Bridge (U.S. Highway 431), the scenic bluffs and Georgia Mountain are visible in the background. The attractive views have excellent scenic value and high scenic integrity.

To the south across from Conners Island, the city of Guntersville is located on the northern end of a peninsula. The peninsula extends about 5 ½-miles-long between Browns Creek on the west side and Big Spring Creek on the east. It averages about a mile wide and has a wooded ridge about 260-foot-high running down the middle. This peninsula is connected to the north shore of the reservoir by a four-lane causeway (U.S. Highway 341) and Houston Bridge.

The Browns Creek embayment enters the reservoir at TRMs 355-357. The broad embayment averages over a mile wide with a four-lane causeway (Alabama Highway 69) crossing near the mouth and mixed development on both sides. On the west bank near the mouth, Marshall County Park No. 2, Lakeside Sailing Center, and other commercial facilities are seen along with residential areas and boathouses. Homes are also visible on the ridges behind. About 3 miles of natural shoreline can be seen upstream from the causeway with another residential area beyond that. On the east bank, beginning near the causeway, views include a wooded parkway, the Guntersville Municipal Park, a filtration plant, and a mix of

residential areas further upstream. The final 3-mile portion of the east bank is natural shoreline with scattered homes visible on the wooded ridge behind the bank.

Big Spring Creek embayment (TRM 358.5) averages about a half mile wide and is crossed by two separate causeways (U.S. Highway 431 and County Road 67). On the west bank, a mix of industrial, utility, and commercial uses can be seen along the city waterfront of Guntersville, with a city park and residential area visible further upstream. Across the embayment on the east bank, several industrial facilities are seen near the mouth. Moving upstream, a mix of homes, boathouses, a city park, commercial recreation, and then some undeveloped areas are visible. Steep, wooded ridges about 500-feet-high provide a generally undisturbed background for this visually congested shoreline.

The embayments surrounding the city and developed areas across the reservoir have the greatest combined concentration of mixed shoreline development and water-use activity on the reservoir. The results are extensive visual congestion, adverse contrast, and very low scenic integrity. Just upstream, residential development lines both shorelines of the reservoir with Buck Island on the west side and Signal Point on the east. With high ridges in the background, these residential areas retain fair scenic values and detract less from the generally pleasant views of the reservoir when seen in broad middle ground views across the water.

The scenic wooded slopes and winding coves of Lake Guntersville State Park begin at TRM 360 and extend for next 3 miles along the east bank. The slopes rise steeply to ridge tops 400-500-feet-high with little development visible from the reservoir. Town Creek embayment winds over 8 miles upstream between the steep slopes. Except for a campground, marina, and a couple of boat-launching areas, the extensive park shoreline remains natural. The scenic values are excellent, and scenic integrity is high.

For the next 13 miles upstream (TRMs 363-376), views of the western shoreline include subdivisions and homes with their associated docks and water-use facilities. Views also include commercial marinas, recreation developments, various camps, and occasional views of passing highway traffic. Several wooded islands accent foreground views, and Gunters Mountain rises about 700 feet in the background with development visible on the slopes. The visual congestion along this area is generally viewed in the foreground, so the scenic value is fair and scenic integrity is low. When viewed from greater distances across the reservoir, details become dimmer, and the scenic value improves.

The eastern shoreline along this portion is much less congested than the western shoreline and provides greater scenic quality for those viewing from the west. Much of the shoreline is natural with gentle slopes and a low wooded ridge in the foreground. A higher ridge of approximately 500 feet rises behind it. The Murphy Hill site (TRMs 368.5-371.8) offers a variety of scenic wooded coves off

the main channel and has two stone jetties extending from the shore. Development on the east bank includes the partially visible Monsanto plant, two commercial recreation areas, a marina, a residential area at the south end (TRM 365) and one at the entrance to South Sauty Creek (TRM 374). A group of densely wooded islands provide scenic accents at the entrance on the north side. The scenic values are very good along most of the eastern shore, and scenic integrity is moderate. A causeway crosses South Sauty Creek embayment (County Road 67) with commercial recreation facilities on the west side. The embayment shoreline slopes gently near the causeway, but further upstream, it is surrounded by steep, wooded slopes of the adjacent mountain. Scenic values are very good, and scenic integrity is high.

On the opposite shore and west of Alabama Highway 79, the scenery in North Sauty Creek embayment (TRM 377) includes substantial wetlands, small islands in the upper portion, extensive hardwood bottoms and blooming lilies in some shallows. They are visible by motorists crossing on U.S. Highway 72 and Alabama Highway 79, by boat traffic and by back-lying development. The scenic value is good, and scenic integrity is moderately high. East of the highway, Goose Pond Colony recreation facilities occupy a peninsula and other shoreline around the north side of the embayment entrance. Several densely wooded islands in the area add pleasing visual accents. The scenic value is good, but scenic integrity is low.

Goose Pond Island (TRMs 378-382) has substantial industrial development and a covered barge-loading structure on the main channel. The industrial facilities have a relatively low height, so the wooded ridge on the east side and vegetation buffers around the other banks screen most views from the reservoir. Residential and recreation developments to the west and south may have occasional views of industrial features. The safety harbor (TRM 379) and other inlet on the south end are among the most scenic coves for secluded overnight anchorage. Scenic values around most of the island are very good, and scenic integrity is relatively high. The adjacent Roseberry Creek embayment (TRM 382.5) extends upstream to the city of Scottsboro. Shoreline development is predominantly comprised of homes with their associated docks and water-use facilities but also includes a municipal park and Jackson County Park. The upper ends of the embayment are primarily wetlands and hardwood bottoms. Scenic values are fair, and scenic integrity is moderately low.

Upstream of Roseberry Creek embayment, the main reservoir narrows to a riverine character. Narrow, scenic islands covered in low trees intermittently line each side of the channel, along with several large areas of blooming water lilies. A number of the islands have relatively still, shallow backwater areas between them and the shoreline. Both banks are generally undeveloped except for the TVA facilities (Bellefonte site and Widows Creek Fossil Plant) on the west bank. A few landings for barely visible back-lying industries can be seen as well. The wooded river ridge landform continues along the west bank and ends just beyond the Bellefonte site with very gently sloping land further upstream. Two large

embayments (Mud Creek-TRM 394.5 and Crow Creek-TRM 401.2) occur along this stretch with little development other than recreation facilities. Both have a tranquil, natural character similar to North Sauty Creek and have less developed shoreline. They are visible by motorists crossing on U.S. Highway 72, small boat traffic, and back-lying residential development. The scenic value of this western shore area is good, and scenic integrity is moderate.

The eastern bank along the toe of Sand Mountain is natural except for a small commercial area at Comer Bridge and the two small residential developments up- and downstream from it. Three scenic embayments (Jones Creek-TRM 388.3, Raccoon Creek-TRM 396.5, and Long Island Creek-TRM 410) occur along the eastern bank, each surrounded by steep, wooded slopes of the mountain.

Sand Mountain extends along the eastern shoreline for about 38 miles and is the most dominant natural feature in the upper half of the reservoir. The mountain provides a distinctive aesthetic background for highway, reservoir, and shoreline views. Slopes rise steeply to 600 feet above the reservoir near South Sauty Creek (TRM 374) and continue rising to almost 1,000 feet along the ridge near Bridgeport, Alabama (TRM 414). The dense forest cover is generally uninterrupted except for occasional transmission lines and utility features. Distinctive scenic bluffs with steep, wooded hillsides above them are visible along the shoreline for 2 ½ miles between the Bellefonte site and the Raccoon Creek embayment. Scenic integrity of the mountain is relatively high, and the scenic value is very good.

The Bellefonte site (TRM 390.4-393.4) occupies 3 miles of shoreline along the west bank. The 477-foot-high cooling towers, 280-foot reactor buildings, and numerous transmission lines dominate the natural landscape and provide significant visual contrast. They can be seen from the reservoir for several miles in each direction and from U.S. Highway 72 to the west. Most other site facilities are not visible behind the river ridge or low trees on the channel islands. The scenic value is fair, and scenic integrity is low. Another 12 miles upstream, TVA's Widows Creek Fossil Plant occupies about a 1.7-mile stretch (TRMs 406.5-408.2) of the west bank shoreline. The plant facilities, coal handling operations, 800-foot and two 500-foot stacks, and transmission lines are visible for several miles along the reservoir. These industrial features dominate the landscape in foreground views. The scenic value is poor, and scenic integrity is very low.

Upstream of the Widows Creek plant, the upper reaches of the reservoir remain narrow and riverine with gently sloping, natural shoreline on either bank and steep, wooded ridges in the background. There is little development other than a small park at South Pittsburg, Tennessee (TRM 418), a few scattered residences, and some old mooring cells. Two large, private islands (Long Island and Burns Island) split the river in this section, and both have dense vegetation buffers along their banks. Battle Creek (TRM 418.7) and the Sequatchie River (TRM 422.6)

enter the reservoir in the last 7 miles below Nickajack Dam. Both streams have scenic qualities, but existing discordant land use has reduced visual attractiveness at their mouths. The scenic value along this uppermost section is good, and the scenic integrity is moderate.