Fun Facts about Lake Murray

Lake Murray turtles have no teeth. They have jagged edges that can cut things. They keep the lake clean by eating dead fish.

The state's official fish is the striped bass and Lake Murray has plenty of them. You can catch them with shad as your bait.

Biggest Fish ever captured was a 298-pound sturgeon by four young men on April 28th 1936. It was 9 feet tall.

Courtesy of:

A South Carolina Regional Tourism District Promoting Lexington, Newberry, Richland and Saluda Counties

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History Of Lake Murray

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The History...

The lake was named after William S. Murray, who was an engineer involved in the design and creation of the dam.

Lexington Water Power Company (now known as South Carolina Electric and Gas) built the dam in order to generate electricity. The lake and dam were under construction from 1927 through 1930.

Approximately 100,000 acres of land was purchased for the building of the dam and lake. Land was purchased from more than 5000 families. The land sold between $15 and $45 an acre.

To make room for the lake, nearly a dozen communities had to abandoned, including Derrick, Pine Ridge, Selwood, Wessinger, Cantsville, Leaphart, Savilla, Boyleston, Lorena, Holly's Ferry and Lorick's Ferry.

Six schools, three churches and about 193 graveyards containing 2,323 graves had to be moved. Some families chose not to move the graves, and at several area churches there are monuments with these names listed.

To clear the land and log the trees, from the area to be covered by water, an average rate of 50 cents per day, was paid to 2,000 men to clear the 65,000 acres by hand using crosscut saws and axes. Out of the trees cut down, 100 million board feet of lumber was manufactured. Some of the lumber was used in the construction of the dam and some was used to build a three-mile railroad between the dam

Each of the towers is 223 feet tall. The four smaller ones were built 16 feet in diameter to draw water from the bottom of the lake into the penstocks (a channel or pipe used to control wa-ter flow or supply water to something such as a hydroelectric plant). The penstocks deliver wa-ter from the base of the towers in the lake to the turbines in the power plant 1,150 feet away. Wa-ter enters the turbines through a spiral case of tapered tubes that diverts water through the tur-bines. Wickets (or gates) regulate the amount of water that enters. The largest tower is 60 feet in diameter and feeds water to the massive arch conduit beneath it.

At a cost of $20.l million, the dam was built in three sections. The dam is 1 ½ Miles long, 375 feet thick, 208 feet high and covers 99 acres. The four spillgates, each 37 ½ ft. long by 25 feet wide are on the Lexington end of the dam. Between 1943 and 1946, two additional gates were added to the spillway, and dam was strengthened by raising the crest 3 ft. The spillways were con-structed to handle any flood situation where the lake's level rose above the 360' mark.

On August 31, 1929 the reservoir began filling with water. Lake Murray covers approximately 50,000 acres of land and 650 miles of shoreline. It is 41 miles long and 14 miles wide at its widest point.

On Dec 1, 1930 at 7 a.m. the first electric power---10,000 kilowatts---was delivered and Lake Murray was celebrated as the world's largest power reservoir.

The official name of the dam is Dreher Shoals, although most people refer to it as Lake Murray Dam.

What is under the lake has been the fascination of many people. There are nearly a dozen communities, thousands of graves, the Wyse Ferry Bridge, bomber airplanes, a pipeline, several railroad tank cars, an old rock house, also homes, boats, and bomb fragments under the waters of Lake Murray.

In the early 1940' the U. S. military use the lake to train bomber pilots on the B-25 bomber airplanes. Seven of the lake's islands, Bomb, Shull, Wessinger, Dreher, Spence Mistey and Holley Key were used as practice targets.

*Information is from The History of Lake Murray, by Kim Bowman.

LAKE MURRAY SHORELINE MILES BY COUNTY

Richland County	37.1 Miles
Lexington County	313.2 Miles
Saluda County	146.6 Miles
Newberry County	160.25 Miles

* These figures may not be exact. Mileage provided by SCE&G Land Department.