



Green Water on St. Patrick's Day

By: Michelle Simpson, PR Specialist G&A Division

What do you think of when it comes to St. Patrick's Day? Do you think about Leprechaun's and their pot of gold at the end of the rainbow?

...or...

Do you think of an Irish themed parade full of balloons and floats running down the main street of your city?

...or what about...

Making sure to wear green so that you don't get pinched?

...and then there is...

Green Water?! What is that all about?



Normally we do anything and everything to make sure our waterways are anything but green, but in the Windy City, they purposely (yet temporarily) dye the Chicago River a dazzling emerald green. The first time I heard about this Wizard of Oz hued tradition, I knew there had to be some kind of amazing background story that would justify such a taboo act in the water world. And of course...I was right!

Some time prior to 1962, Mayor Richard J. Daley put on his watershed and water quality protection hat in an attempt to deal with a massive waterway pollution problem. In this capacity, Daley authorized the pouring of a special green dye into the river that would pinpoint where dumping was occurring.

Then in late 1961 Stephen Bailey, the city's St. Patrick's Day Parade chairman, observed a coworker's green-soaked overalls

following a day of dispensing Daley's dye into the river. This gave Bailey the bright idea to turn the entire river green on March 17th in celebration of the Feast of Saint Patrick.

It took the group a few years to get the amount just right but they finally arrived at the magic number: 25 pounds of the special green dye = 1 day of green water (or about 5 full hours). The recipe for the special green dye is protected and still considered as sacred as the recipe for Bush's Baked Beans.

Who knew that one city's unique tradition was established on the coattails of an attempt to improve water quality? Even though our waterways aren't made green on March 17th, water quality and watershed protection should still be important.

Just as Mayor Richard Daley put on his watershed and water quality protection hat, so has the San Jacinto River Authority (SJRA).



We recognize the importance of a well maintained and non-impaired body of water. The area around Lake Conroe has undergone steady urban development, and its location within the Houston metropolitan area will continue to attract heavy recreational use of the lake. Fortunately, and unlike some of the reservoirs in Texas, the water quality in Lake Conroe remains excellent and is generally unimpaired by this urban development around its perimeter. This anticipated growth and continued recreational use will present significant challenges to maintaining Lake Conroe's current excellent water quality.

In an attempt to maintain the great water quality in Lake Conroe, SJRA completed a comprehensive Watershed Protection Plan (WPP) in May of 2015. The WPP focuses on monitoring the water quality in Lake Conroe, developing potential strategies to reduce problems from future growth and other activities in the watershed, as well as educating the public about water quality and how they can improve the already excellent water quality in Lake Conroe.

For more information on the Lake Conroe Watershed Protection Plan or water quality efforts, please visit our website at www.sjra.net/lakeconroe/. ♦