Watts Bar Reservoir

Watts Bar Reservoir is on the Tennessee River in east Tennessee. It extends 72.4 miles northeast from the dam to Fort Loudoun Dam.

Watts Bar, located about midway between Knoxville and Chattanooga, is one of nine TVA dams on the Tennessee River. The reservoir attracts millions of recreation visits each year for boating, fishing, swimming, camping, and other outdoor activities. A scenic overlook near the dam provides visitors with a panoramic view of the reservoir and surrounding countryside.

The dam was completed in January 1942, three weeks after Pearl Harbor, and provided urgently needed electricity for the war effort.

The lock at Watts Bar handles more than a million tons of cargo a year, and the reservoir plays an important role in flood control. In conjunction with other tributary and main-river reservoirs above Chattanooga, it is of special value to that city, which is the point of greatest flood hazard in the Valley.

Without the regulation these dams provide, Chattanooga and other downstream communities would have suffered several major floods and many smaller ones over the years that would have resulted in damage amounting to some $4.9 billion.

Watts Bar:
Facts & Figures

Construction of Watts Bar Dam began in 1939 and was completed in 1942.

Watts Bar provides 722 miles of shoreline and over 39,090 acres of water surface.

In addition to forming a navigable 72.4-mile-long reservoir on the Tennessee River, Watts Bar also creates a slack-water channel for navigation more than 20 miles up the Clinch River and 12 miles up its tributary, the Emory.

Watts Bar Dam is 112 feet high and stretches 2,960 feet across the Tennessee River.

Watts Bar has one 60- by 360-foot lock that lifts and lowers barges as much as 70 feet from one reservoir to the next.

Watts Bar has a flood-storage capacity of 379,000 acre-feet.

The generating capacity at Watts Bar is 175,000 kilowatts of electricity.