

REPLACEMENT OF THE LAKE MONTGOMERY FISHING PIER



FISHING PIER AT SUWANNEE LAKE

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The Lake Montgomery Fishing Pier was determined to be unsafe in March of this year, and had to be closed and demolished. Now the whole community needs to pitch in and assure this pier is replaced with an even better pier that is designed to accommodate able as well as disabled citizens of this area.



A Successful and Happy Fisherman on the Lake Montgomery Pier Before Closure

- **Many people in this area enjoyed using the pier, some because of need for a meal, some because of need for therapy, and many more for the pure enjoyment of fishing.**
- **Photos on the next two pages are of people, able and disabled, enjoying the benefits of fishing from piers in North Central Florida lakes.**



VA COMMUNITY LIVING CENTER RESIDENTS ON A FISHING OUTING



FISHING IS A FORM OF RECREATIONAL THERAPY



THIS PIER MEETS ADA REQUIREMENTS FOR WHEELCHAIR ACCESSIBILITY



SUWANNEE LAKE PIER IN SUWANNEE COUNTY



BIGGEST ONE OF THE DAY



NOT A BAD DAY ON THE LAKE!



THESE ARE FUN TO CATCH TOO!



**WAITING FOR A BITE
(McNeill Lake Pier at PCS)**



**HIS FIRST FISH!
(Alligator Lake Fishing Pier)**



TYPICAL DAY ON THE SUWANNEE LAKE PIER

LAKE MONTGOMERY FISHING PIER

Below: Fisherman on the Lake Montgomery Pier Before Closure



OVERVIEW

Lake Montgomery (aka Hamburg Lake) is a Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC) [Fish Management Area](#) located in Lake City, Florida. Access is provided via a City park. In 1990, FWC and the City of Lake City built a fishing pier on the lake. It continued to receive heavy use as a very popular fishing destination until 2017 when the fishing pier had to be removed. It had reached an age and condition where it was determined to be unsafe.

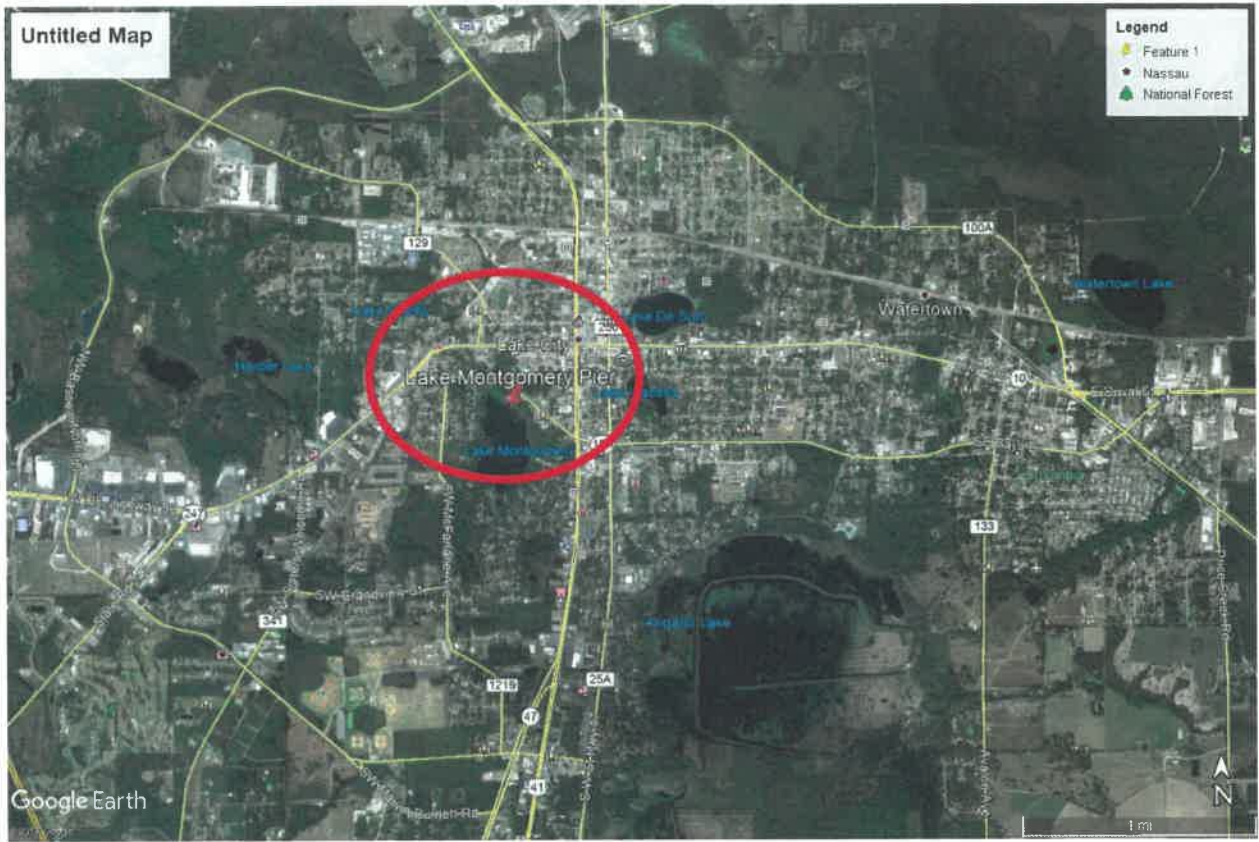
During the final three months the pier was open, FWC installed a game camera to document usage. From 11/16/16 to 2/14/17 a total of 3,672 people visited the pier for an average of 41 visitors per day, making this one of the most popular fishing piers in Lake City.

Not only was this a popular pier for general residents of Lake City and surrounding areas, it was also a popular destination for the local Veteran's Affairs (VA) hospital to take patients for recreational therapy. The lake is located approximately 0.5 miles from the VA hospital which allows for short trips for patients that are unable to leave the hospital for longer journeys.

Recent discussions have centered on how the pier can better suit needs of multiple stakeholder groups, including birders and wildlife watchers. The current proposal includes adding a second deck at the end of the pier that could serve as a wildlife viewing observation tower as well as shade for the first deck. Additionally, there are educational placards incorporated into this project to demonstrate the important role Lake City resources play in the environment.

FWC has been working with the City of Lake City and a few dedicated local volunteers in an attempt to secure permits and final engineering for this project. An estimate of ~\$300,000 will be targeted through several different grant opportunities. A breakdown of the costs is enclosed. General letters of Support are needed and appreciated, to help with grant writing.

Location of Lake Montgomery within Lake City.



Fishing pier on the north shore of Lake Montgomery.



NO.	DATE	REVISION

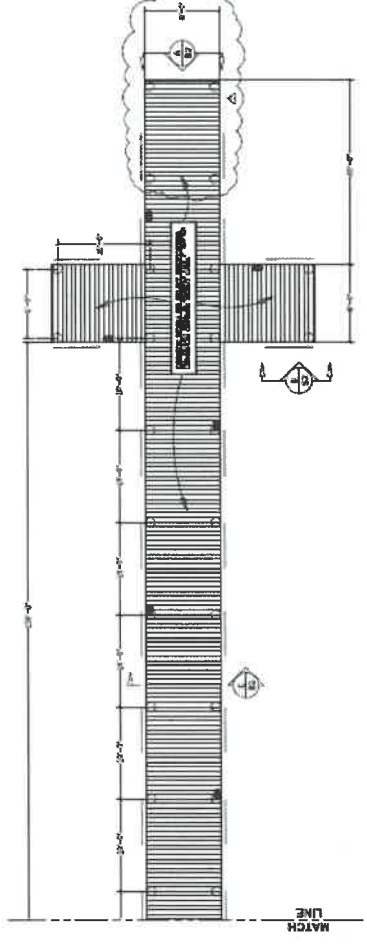
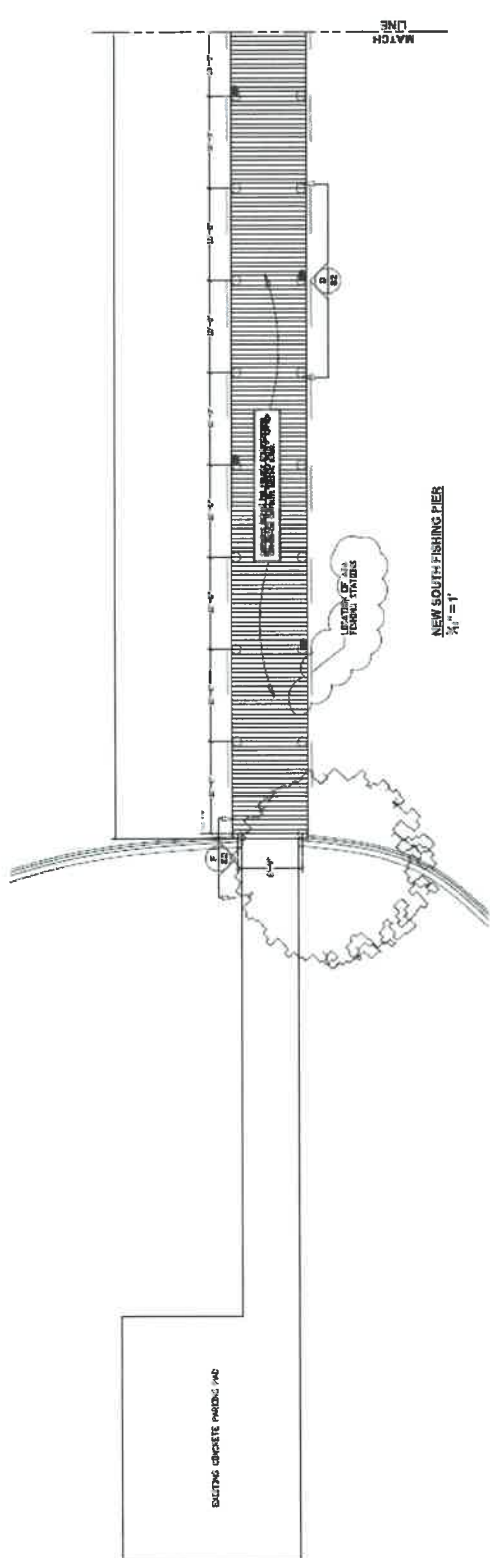


**SUMANEE LAKE
REPLACEMENT FISHING PIEN**
LIVE OAK, FL

DESIGNED BY: [Signature]
CHECKED BY: [Signature]
DATE: 4/27/11

PROJECT NO.: 1516-100
SHEET NO.: 21A

FINAL SET FOR CONSTRUCTION



FOR BIDS ONLY
FWC 15/16-100

NEW SOUTH FISHING PIER
1/4" = 1'

DEMOLITION PLAN
1/4" = 1'

LEGEND
EXISTING STRUCTURE AND

Item No.	Unit	Item Description (Unit Price in Words)	Qty	Estimate
1	Lump Sum	General Requirements. (Payment & Performance Bonds, Indemnification, Insurance, Etc)	1	\$10,000
2	Lump Sum	Mobilization. (All materials, labor and equipment) required for mobilization.)	1	\$15,000
3	Square Foot of Fishing Pier	Demolition of existing fishing pier. All labor, materials, tools, equipment and incidentals necessary to demolish and dispose off site all pilings, structural and non-structural components of the existing fishing pier.	2,536	\$55,000
4	Square Foot of Fishing Pier	Construction of new fishing pier. All labor, materials, tools, equipment and incidentals necessary to construct a new fishing pier.	2,536	\$165,000
5	Lump Sum	Demobilization. (All materials, labor and equipment) required for demobilization.)	1	\$15,000
Contingencies ≈20%				50,000
Subtotal				\$310,000
Engineering and Permitting (≈15%)				\$50,000
Total				\$360,000



**Replacement With Pier Built
With Suwannee Lake Pier
Engineering Drawings**

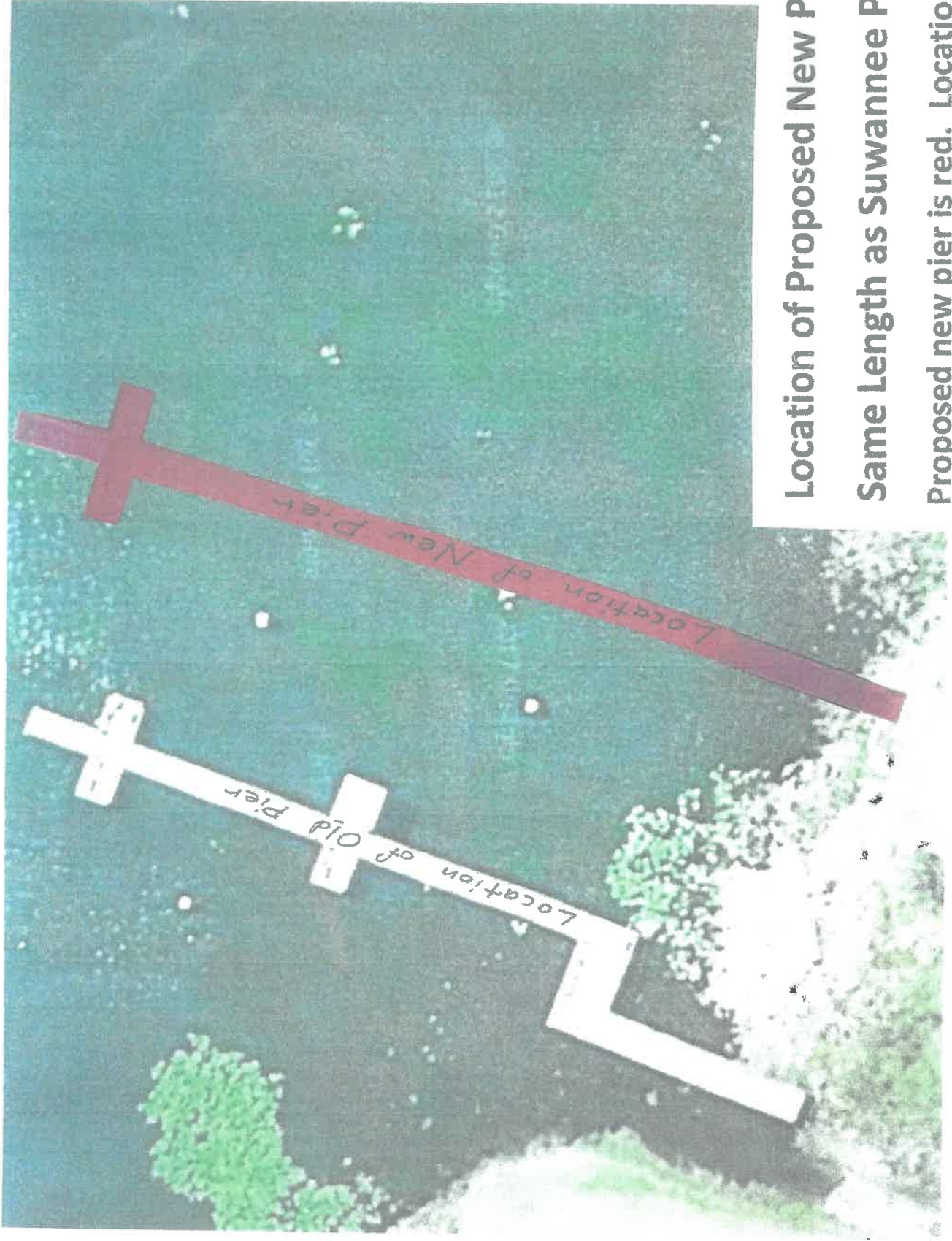
217 feet long

2056 square feet

Estimated cost to build: \$206,000

With additional wing: \$222,000

(2)



Location of Proposed New Pier
Same Length as Suwannee Pier
Proposed new pier is red. Location of
old pier is white.

Lake City Reporter

LAKECITYREPORTER.COM

LAKE MONTGOMERY PIER

CASTING FOR CASH



The Lake City Public Works Department and a prison work crew dismantles the dock on Lake Montgomery in March. The dock was closed on Feb. 13 for safety reasons, said Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission spokeswoman Karen Parker. Lake City Public Works Director Thomas Henry said he has been unsuccessful in finding a grant to cover the \$360,000 price tag

Photos by CARL MCKINNEY/Lake City Reporter

City, FWC say they do not have funds for new dock

By **CARL MCKINNEY**
cmckinney@lakecityreporter.com

Whether for recreation, therapy or sustenance, an average of 40 to 55 people were visiting the Lake Montgomery pier each day during the months before the structure's demolition in March.

Community members were disheartened when the city had to dismantle the pier due to safety concerns, said Lake City Public Works Director Thomas Henry. Now, residents, city officials and the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission are hoping to find a way to pay for the replacement structure, estimated to cost \$360,000.

"It's a pretty popular pier," Henry said. "It's a place for our local citizens to spend some quality time with their families, teach their chil-

dren how to fish and just enjoy some kind of outdoor recreational activity."

The pier, which was handicap-accessible, also had a medical use, said FWC Regional Administrator Allen Martin.

Patients from the Lake City VA Medical Center would use the pier for recreational therapy, which can help treat a range of both physical and mental conditions.

"It's very important to them for recreational therapy," Martin said.

There are also those who depended on the pier to put food on the table, Henry said.

"People depended on it to feed their families or feed themselves," Henry said.

An FWC engineer earlier this year determined



Lake Montgomery's popular pier has been gone for more than a month now, and its absence has been felt by community members.

DOCK continued on 2A

DOCK

Continued From 1A

the pier was unsafe, Henry said. Pylons were decaying, and the underside of the wooden structure lacked enough bracing.

A city inspector later asked the public works department to demolish the pier, which had been standing for 25 years, Henry said.

Henry said he's been unsuccessful in finding a grant to cover the \$360,000 price tag of replacing the pier, which includes the cost of obtaining permits from the Suwannee River Water Management District.

"There may be a grant out there, but I have not been able to find one yet," Henry said.

The city is turning to other avenues, such as soliciting donations for the replacement pier, Henry said.

So far, no one has contributed.

A group of private residents is working with the city and FWC to spread

awareness about the pier by distributing literature about its importance to VA patients and the community. The volunteers are part of a committee that also consists of city and FWC officials, which met on Friday to discuss the fundraising effort, Martin said.

The committee hopes to get support from State Rep. Elizabeth Porter, R-Lake City.

FWC is helping to organize the project, but has no dedicated funding for pier construction projects, Martin said. Unlike the city, state agencies cannot ask for fundraising donations, he said.

"If we're gonna get this pier replaced, it's going to take a group effort," Martin added.

The new pier would consist of a high-end composite plastic material that would significantly outlast the former wooden structure, Martin said.

Cameras monitored the foot traffic on the pier in its final months, Martin said, averaging around 40 per day with peaks of around 55 to 60.

Lake City Mayor Stephen Witt hopes the city, county and FWC can work out a plan.

"Hopefully, between the private sector, the city, game commission and everybody else, we can all get together and do something there," Witt said.

The pier provided much-needed recreational value to the community, Witt said.

"It was a great place to go," he said.

On Monday afternoon, Shirley Coffee sat in the grass as she cast her line into the lake, saying she hopes the pier is rebuilt promptly.

"When the pier was here, you could catch bigger fish," Coffee said. "You can't get as far out now."

Anyone interested in contributing to the project can call Henry at 386-758-5400 or email henryt@lcfla.



Witt

5/19/2018

Article in Suwannee Democrat

http://www.suwanneedemocrat.com/news/va-patients-enjoy-fishing-trip-to-suwannee-lake/article_39c72f9c-59e5-11e8-b44f-43f2d43bd402.html

FEATURED

CATCH OF THE DAY

VA patients enjoy fishing trip to Suwannee Lake

By Jamie Wachter jamie.wachter@gaffnews.com May 17, 2018

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Disabled veterans, VA Hospital workers and volunteers enjoy a fishing trip at Suwannee Lake last week.
Jamie Wachter

LIVE OAK, Fla. — No sooner had John Hilliard arrived at Suwannee Lake on May 10 than he began trying to get his hands on a rod and reel.

"Oh shoot, I like to fish," the 59-year-old Ohio native said. "I love to fish.

"But ain't had the chance."

http://www.suwanneedemocrat.com/news/va-patients-enjoy-fishing-trip-to-suwannee-lake/article_39c72f9c-59e5-11e8-b44f-43f2d43bd402.html



A volunteers helps bait a hook for one of the VA patients.
Jamie Wachter

The Navy veteran and three other military veterans got the opportunity Thursday thanks to the efforts of Gene McNeill, the Suwannee County administration and a helping hand from Anderson Columbia.

McNeill was working at PCS Phosphate, now Nutrien, in White Springs nearly 30 years ago when he began the push that led to Thursday's outing.

While checking on the water situations at some of the lakes on the company's property, McNeill came upon a car — with fishing poles — parked at the gate to a lake that had a no fishing sign posted.

Upon stopping to inform them that they couldn't fish there, McNeill said a man was helping get his wife into a wheelchair, both likely in their 70s. The woman was undergoing kidney dialysis several times a week at the time.

"He said after dialysis, she always felt real bad so he'd bring her out there fishing and she really enjoyed that," McNeill recalled, adding that the couple told him they had fished there previously, catching catfish.

"I told them that I was sorry but this was recirculated process water. We allow fishing over at Eagle Lake. He said, 'Yeah, we've been over there but there's nowhere she can fish in her wheelchair.' Because of the slope, he couldn't get her close enough to the water."

That prompted action from McNeill.

He began a push that turned into McNeill Lake opening in the early 2000s with a pier that was handicap accessible.

Visits with David Lowe, a triple amputee from Tallahassee, at the VA Hospital in Lake City turned into fishing trips. Which turned into taking a group of the vets from the VA to the lake in the mid-2000s.

"It's something I like to do," McNeill said.



Four patients from the VA Hospital caught fish last week at Suwannee Lake.
Jamie Wachter

But recently, those trips stopped.

The pier at McNeill Lake was flooded and hasn't been repaired.

The pier at Lake Montgomery, within walking distance of the VA Hospital, was condemned and torn down.

The pier at Suwannee Lake, though, was in great shape and perfect for the disabled veterans.

But there was still work to be done. The path leading to the pier was torn up by erosion. So McNeill reached out, with direction from Suwannee County Clerk of Court Barry Baker (an old coworker at PCS), to County Chairman Ricky Gamble.

With Anderson Columbia willing to donate millings to fix the path, Suwannee County's road department paved it.

The fishing could resume.

"He needed our help and I told him I'd whatever we could to make it happen," Gamble said. "It was a worthwhile project."

It was a worthwhile trip for the four veterans who made it.

"Oh yeah," Hilliard said about enjoying the morning outing. "They kept talking about it but I've been on antibiotics for so long and couldn't get out here.

"But now that I had a chance to get out here, I was coming."

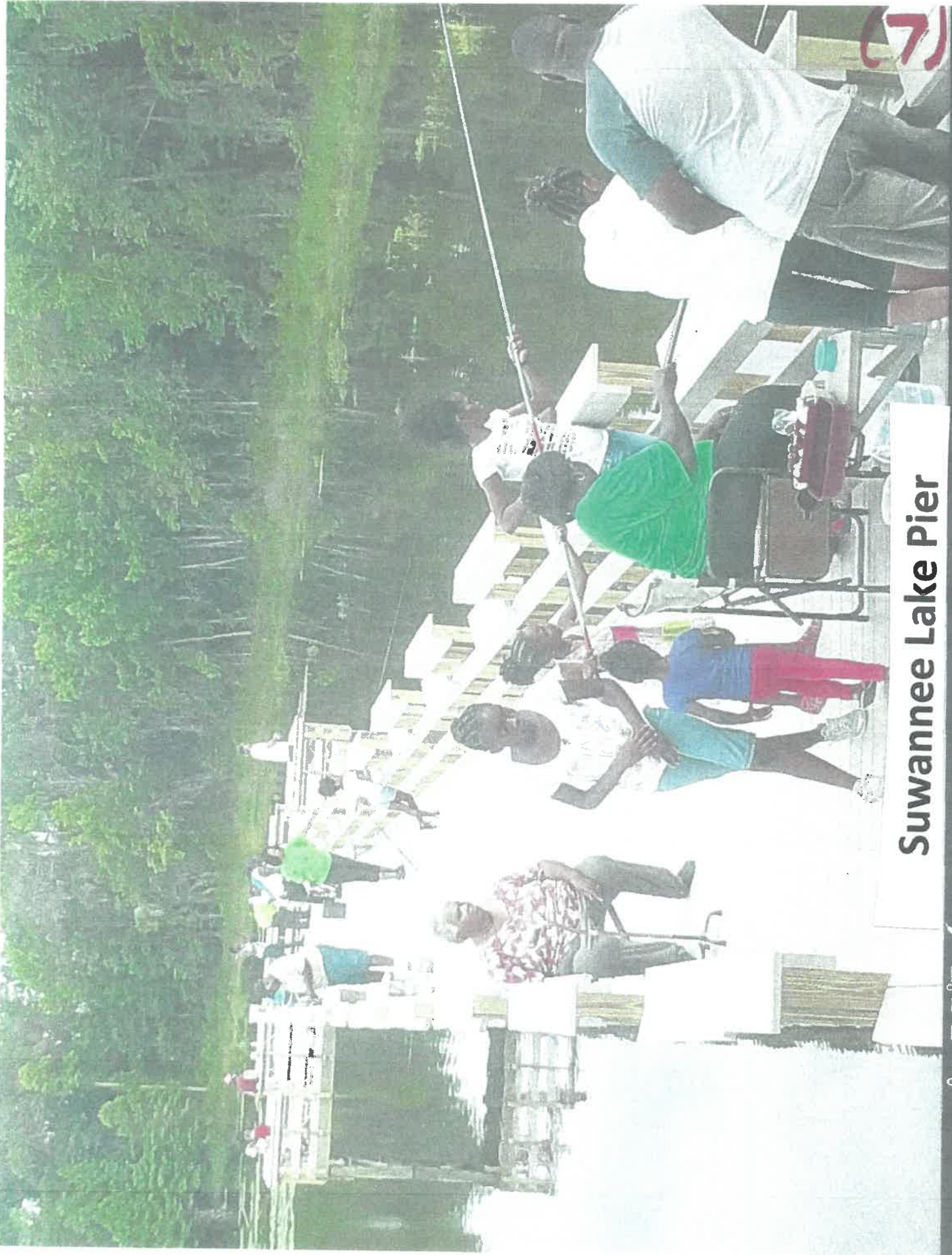
McNeill added: "These recreational therapists will tell you that it's really good for them. Just to get out and do anything. But even better when they actually catch some fish."

Hilliard is proof of that. With temperatures nearing 90 degrees as the morning wore on, the big fish weren't to be found. Instead, small brim were the catches of the day.

"They were little, but I don't care," Hilliard said. "It was fun just catching them."

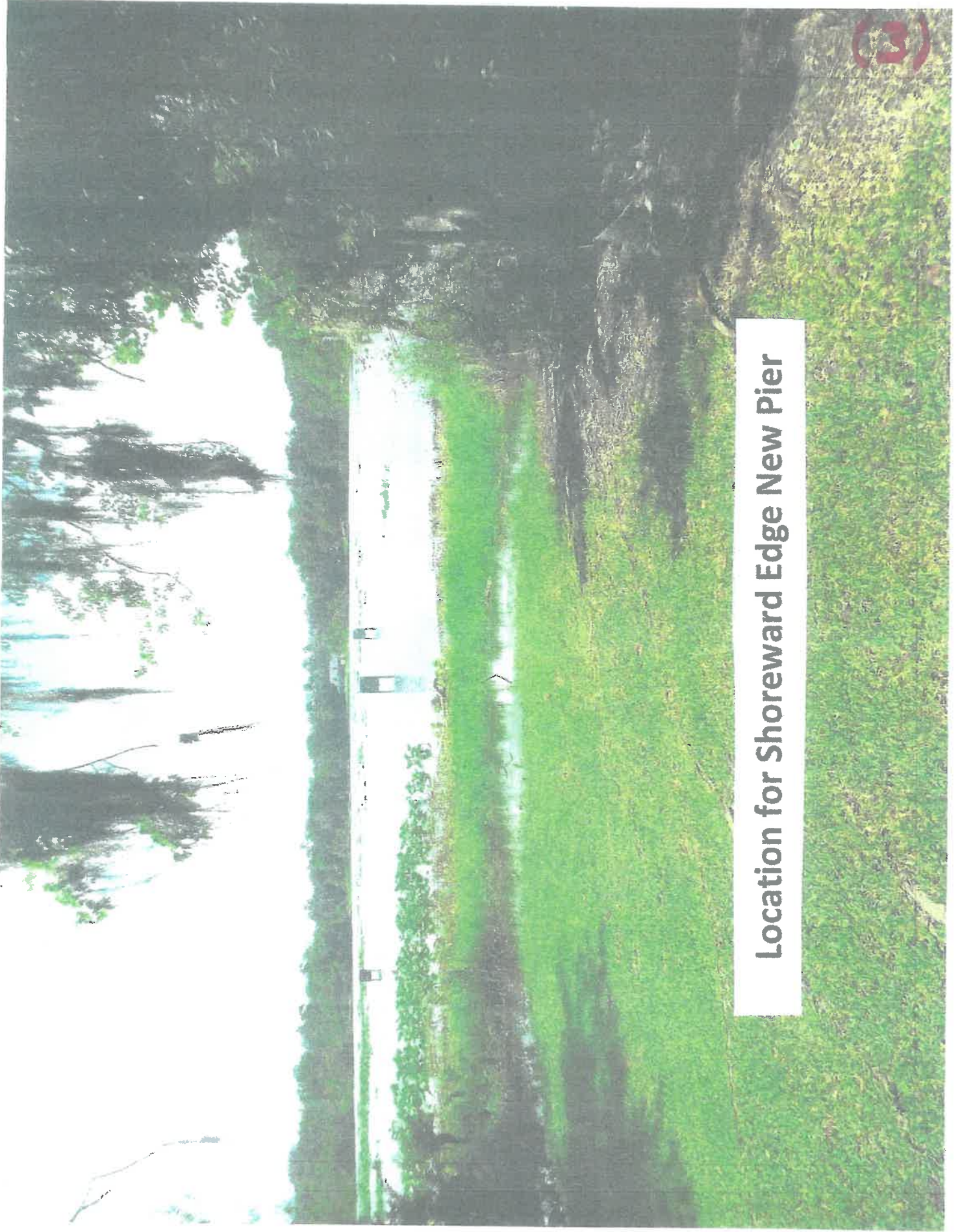


John Hilliard reels in a fish during the fishing trip to Suwannee Lake last week.
Jamie Wachter



Suwannee Lake Pier

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Location for Shoreward Edge New Pier

Example of fishing pier with an elevated observation deck.

<https://people.well.com/user/pk/waterfront/photo-of-the-week/Pier-040517.html>

