Safe Boat Driving – Lake Norman Boating Navigational Aids (ATON)

Numbered and lighted channel markers for both the main lake and major creeks begin at Cowens Ford Dam and continue northward to Buffalo Shoals Bridge. Keep the RED triangular marker on the boat’s starboard (right) side and GREEN rectangular markers on the port (left) when proceeding up lake or when entering a channel from the main body of water. Creek channel marker numbers will get higher as you travel away from the main channel. DO NOT pass between the marker and the shore. There are also lighted and unlighted danger markers indicating a shoal or rocks. DO NOT go near these markers.

Additional Key Safety Considerations

- **Lake levels** can vary as much as 8 feet in normal operation. They are generally drawn down during the fall and winter months. Call Duke Energy’s toll free number at 1-800-829-5253 for hourly updates or go online at https://lakes.duke-energy.com

- **Debris will be floating in the lake** Use extreme caution when navigating the lake following an increase in lake levels due to high rains or run-off. Natural debris such as logs or sticks is generally left to dissipate naturally. Manmade debris should be reported to Duke Energy Lake Services at 1-800-829-5253.

- **Bridge Clearances** Lake Norman is spanned by five major bridges & sixteen additional bridges. The approximate vertical bridge clearances when the lake is at full pond may be found on our website at www.http://lnmc.org/lkn/?s=bridge-height.

Who We Are

The Lake Norman Marine Commission (LNMC) consists of 5 members appointed by the Counties bordering Lake Norman—Catawba, Iredell, Lincoln and Mecklenburg. The LNMC is responsible for taking appropriate responsibility for Lake Norman and its shoreline area for all matters relating to or affecting public recreation and water safety. As part of these duties the LNMC maintains a Navigational Marker System, encourages and promotes Boater Education, works with Duke Energy on lake development, develops and manages a long range Aquatic Plant Management Plan for Hydrilla and works with government agencies and other organizations and the public in addressing important lake issues.

All information is current as of January 2019. If you have any other questions about this information or other aspects of life on the lake, please contact the Lake Norman Marine Commission at 704-564-6333. The web site is LNMC.org. Email address is LNMC@LNMC.org.

REMEMBER

Respect and consideration for others will make the Lake safer and more enjoyable for all.

Need Help? Questions?
In any emergency, CALL 911

- Catawba County Sheriff's Office 828-464-3112
- Iredell County Sheriff’s Office 704-878-3100
- Lincoln County Sheriff’s Office 704-735-8202
- Cornelius Police Department 704-892-7773
- NC Wildlife Resources Commission 800-662-7137

Welcome to the best recreational facility in North Carolina – Lake Norman, also known as the Inland Sea.

About This Fabulous Resource

- Lake Norman was completed in 1964 by Duke Energy to provide power for the region
- Cowans Ford Dam is 130 feet high and 1,279 feet long
- The distance from Lookout Shoals Dam to Cowans Ford Dam is 34 miles
- Lake Norman has a surface area of 32,500 acres and has 520 miles of shoreline
- The Lake holds 3.4 trillion gallons of water and is 130 deep at its deepest point
- This body of water is the fifth in a chain of nine lakes on the Catawba River
- There are 10 public boat access areas on the lake including Lake Norman State Park and 7 fee based boat access areas
- Lake Norman has 16 marinas on the lake providing a variety of services including gas, dockage, storage, boat sales, and repair services
- There are over 15,000 residential and commercial docks on the lake

The LNMC wants you to safely enjoy your time on the lake with family and friends. Please enjoy the lake responsibly and help keep everyone safe. More details on the following laws and rules, as well as additional topics can be found on our website, www.lnmc.org
Key Laws and Rules


- Anyone under 13 must wear a Personal Floatation Device in a boat that is under power.

- All of Lake Norman has a no-wake zone within 150 feet of any dock, bridge, marina, boat ramp, and within 100 feet of a law enforcement vessel that is displaying a flashing blue light. No wake speed is idle speed or a speed creating no appreciable wake.

- While open containers and consuming alcohol on a boat is allowed, Boating While Impaired laws are strictly enforced and are the same as driving a motor vehicle. Beer and unfortified wine are allowed on any vessel, but mixed beverages, spirituous liquor, and fortified wine are only allowed on a vessel which can be considered to be a secondary residence.

- No littering.

- There is no discharging of holding tanks allowed into the Lake.

- It is illegal to possess Sterile Grass Carp without a permit.

- Rafting of three (3) to ten (10) vessels shall be conducted at least 100 yards from the shoreline. Rafting of eleven (11) or more vessels shall be conducted at least 300 yards from the shoreline. One (1) or two (2) vessels may be tied or anchored within 100 yards of the shoreline, but they must be at least fifty (50) yards from any other vessel or group of vessels tied or anchored together.

- Every vessel operating between the hours of sunset and sunrise shall display bow and stern lights.

- Special rules for Personal Water Craft (PWC)
  - Anyone under the age of 16 is required to be certified to operate a PWC or boat; No one under 14 can operate a PWC on the water.
  - A PWC cannot be operated at any time between sunset and sunrise.
  - The operator and all passengers on a PWC must be wearing a personal flotation device.

- Any person being towed by a boat or PWC must wear a personal flotation device.

Safe Boat Driving: Rules of the Road

Meeting When two vessels approach each other from opposite directions “head on”, each must alter course to the right to avoid collision. If the two vessels are far enough to the left of each other so that no change in direction is needed for safe passage, both will maintain their course and speed to pass clear.

Crossing When two vessels approach each other at an angle, the one on the right has the right-of-way and the other must stay clear.

Restricted Maneuverability Sailboats not under power and vessels propelled by oars or paddles have the right-of-way over motorboats except in an overtaking situation where the vessel being overtaken always has the right-of-way.

Passing When one vessel overtakes another going in the same direction, the craft being overtaken must maintain course and speed, and the passing vessel must keep a sufficient distance to avoid collision or endangering the other craft from its wake.

Speed and Control All vessels must be operated at reasonable speeds for given situations and must be under the complete control of the operator at all times.

Danger Areas Vessels passing close to swimming areas, moored vessels, or vessels engaged in fishing, servicing buoys, or similar activities, must reduce their speed so as to prevent injury to swimmers or other occupants of the area.

Required Boating Equipment

For a safe day on the lake, the following is the required equipment on all boats. Further detail by class of boat can be found on the North Carolina Wildlife Commission website https://www.ncwildlife.org/Boating/Laws-Safety

1. Lights – Red to Port (left), Green to Starboard (right), 360 degree white all around light or 135 degree stern light and 225 degree masthead light. Sailboats under sail alone shall exhibit the combined lantern (red to port, green to starboard) and 135 degree stern light, but no 225 degree masthead light.

2. Wearable PFD for each person on board (Type I, II, or III may be onboard or Type V if worn).

3. Fire extinguisher sized appropriately for vessel.

4. Whistle or sound producing device.