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April 15, 2025

Catawba, Iredell, Lincoln, and Mecklenburg Board
Of County Commissioners and County Managers

Subject: Activities Report for Third Quarter FY 24-25

Dear Chairpersons & County Managers,

This report summarizes the Lake Norman Marine Commission (LNMC) Activities for the fiscal third quarter of FY 2024 - 2025 ending on March 31, 2025.

1. BOATING SAFETY

A. Boater Safety Law (State)

Current state law requires boater education for all operators of boats in North Carolina born after Jan 1, 1988, who are residents of NC. We updated and maintain a comprehensive list of all education opportunities, both in-person and on-line, throughout the year on our website at lnmc.org.

Boating knowledge for rentals continues to be a concern. We are providing rental companies and marinas with copies of our brochure that details the boating safety laws and requirements in NC and we are requiring them to conduct training prior to renting boats on Lake Norman per our new Rental regulation.

We also had several meetings with legislators, attorneys, and citizens to develop a plan to close the loophole in the NC state law which exempts renters from any training requirements.

B. Boater Education

The Boater Education committee continued to develop education materials and programs around the theme "Love Where You Lake". Cards and brochures were distributed to boat dealers, marinas, restaurants, boat and home rental companies, and lake law enforcement. They include a QR code link to a web site that lists all boater safety laws and lake information.

The LNMC is collaborating with Boat Clubs, Lake Norman businesses, the US

Coast Guard Auxiliary, and North Carolina Wildlife Resources Commission to sponsor Boating Education programs presented in the area. We provided classes free of charge through sponsors at the new Joshua Murray Safety Center at Blythe Landing. Several classes were held in the quarter at locations around the lake, with many graduates.

Boating education continues through awareness notices on social networks, reminding Lake Norman boaters of requirements for boat rentals and charters. More than 10 Lake Norman-related website groups receive regular feedback and comments to help users understand the updated requirements and regulations.

LNMC also provides monthly informational articles published in “mailbox” publications around the lake and works with local media to publicize key initiatives such as emergency response procedures and processes.

LNMC had a booth for the four day Mid-Atlantic Boat Show at the Charlotte Convention Center in February. During the time we interacted with hundreds of citizens, many new to the area. We answered many questions and provided lake information including our waterproof maps, training material and leads to classes around the lake.

C . No-Wake Issues

We continued to distribute our updated Lake Norman map which indicates the 150 foot no wake zone and areas for water sports activities that show wake surfing must be conducted at least 200 feet from docks and structures.

D . Navigational Aids

The LNMC currently maintains 192 navigational aids on Lake Norman including Channel Markers, Shoal Markers and No Wake Bridge Buoys. This marker system is fundamental to the safety of all boaters on Lake Norman.

We continued to assess Hurricane Helene damage. It appears to be limited though some lights need replacement. We continued upgrading markers that had faded signs for better visibility. We worked with our contractor to select a better light solution which should provide over double the life of the current solution. A list of markers requiring repair is on our website under “ATON Report to Boaters”.

E . PFD Distribution Program

Each year Lake Norman has fatalities due to individuals entering the water without a PFD (Personnel Flotation Device, Life Jacket) available. Again during the 2024 boating season, the one boating fatality could have been prevented with the use of PFDs. Law enforcement has reported that violations of this requirement occur because boaters do not have the proper equipment, especially for inexperienced boaters. To address this we will continue to supply PFD’s in all sizes to local law enforcement, NC Wildlife and Coast Guard Auxiliary to provide free of charge to boaters that do not have the proper equipment.

F. Dock Flotation / Life Rings Program

In addition to drownings from boats, there have been several off of docks in recent years. Along with supporting initiatives started by other groups, we are continuing our program of giving free lifesaving rings to be added to personal docks. Over 200 have been provided in all four counties. Public feedback has been very positive.

2. ENVIRONMENTAL & PUBLIC RECREATION

A. Aquatic Growth Management

Based on our October 2024 Lake Norman Aquatic Vegetation Survey Report, which may be found on our website, during the quarter we did the following:

– We met with the NC Department of Environmental Quality to plan for the increased **hydrilla** population. In 2024 the only area with dense growth north of Buffalo Shoals Road was suppressed by active management with a herbicide application since carp were unable to access the very shallow area. We agreed to retreat it in 2025. We agreed to treat the new acreage in Mundy Creek by stocking it with 550 sterile grass carp.

- We reviewed the the extent of **lyngbya** and estimated it to cover 28 acres in Lake Norman in 2025. Lyngbya, a blue-green algae that forms dense mats on the water surface was discovered in approximately ten acres in Fall 2023 and we completed six treatments in 2024.

We are planning to expand the treatment area to 25 acres in 2025. To improve our efficiency, while lowering costs in the next four years, we formed a coalition with Charlotte Water, Duke, the Lake Wylie Marine Commission, and the Catawba Wateree Water Management Group to develop a comprehensive plan. A meeting was held with county and state officials on January 15 to present the proposal and long term funding requirements. Our Environmental Committee will work with this group and NC State to plan and administer the program in 2025. The counties responded with funding for 2025 and the first treatments will begin in April.

B. Recreation & Boating

Boating season will begin in April 2025. The number of rental boats and rental properties with boats has continued to grow exponentially, resulting in many first-time boaters on the lake. We continue to work with county enforcement officers and NC Wildlife Resources Commission to enhance knowledge of boating safety laws. Our “Love Where You Lake” campaign gives basic boater safety rules and is getting great support from boat and home rental companies and marinas.

3. LNMC ORDINANCES

A. Charter Boat Ordinance: The Charter Boat Ordinance has been revised to include all boats that operate on Lake Norman that offer paid services to the public.

Modeled on Coast Guard rules, it requires a Captain's license, passenger pickups at approved areas and annual boat inspections by the Marine Commission. This will ensure that any charter vessel being operated on Lake Norman serving the public will meet safety requirements. In 2024 we had a dozen charter operators with twenty vessels registered. We have started receiving applications for 2025.

B. Rental Boat Regulation: The regulation, effective in 2024, requires vessel registration and inspection, insurance, and training for renters, and a pre-rental checklist. Using our online registration system we have enrolled nearly 50 companies and over 400 vessels.

In January the NC Wildlife Resources Commission incorporated our regulation verbiage in their rules, making them fully enforceable by all law enforcement agencies on the lake.

Despite great progress, many companies continue to operate rentals and charter illegally. and we are working with legal and counties to plan and drive increased enforcement.

C. No Wake Buoy Ordinance: The procedure and permit application for No Wake buoys are on our website at Inmc.org. Very few applications have been received recently since 150 foot no wake law is already in place. There is concern about the large number of illegal buoys that have been placed in the lake which pose navigation hazards. NC Wildlife began removal, but progress is slow. We are working with Duke Energy, NC Wildlife and the Lake Wylie Marine Commission to accelerate removals.

D. Rafting Ordinance: Events on the lake that involve a larger number of boats continue to apply for rafting permits as required. This has been effective in controlling the larger rafting events that have caused problems in the past. Law enforcement participates in the approval of these permits.

E. Government and Legislative Liaison Committee: This committee, originally announced in September 2024, was formally chartered during the quarter. We have been working over two years to update our original 1969 legislation. We have completed several reviews with the NC Attorney General's office to determine our regulations are fully enforceable under our current legislation. We completed a project with the NC General Statutes Commission to prepare a bill to update the 1969 law and make it a General Statute. It was pulled from the NC House at the last minute due to a clandestine effort by a group to replace the Commission.

This committee has continued progress on new legislation, based on the previous work with the General Statutes Commission, with public working meetings with input from all counties and the public. The goal is to complete it by the end of April.

4. ADMINISTRATIVE

- A. Shoreline Management Plan After participating in many meetings in 2024, the 2025 update to the Duke Shoreline Management Plan, as required by the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC), was presented to the public in two meetings in January. We participated in these reviews to help answer questions and gather public input. An additional work group meeting is in April.
- B. Communication / Website
The Marine Commission website at Inmc.org provides links to a wealth of information that would be useful to boaters operating in Lake Norman as well as residents and owners. Overviews and activities and minutes of our seven active Committees are available. Monthly meeting agenda and minutes are also published. Usage continues to grow year over year to several thousand per month, most notably in the areas dealing with laws, regulations, training and navigation.

Please contact me if you have any questions or input for the Marine Commission.



David Scott
Executive Director