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

Subject: Activities Report for Third Quarter of FY 23-24

Dear Chairpersons & County Managers,

This report summarizes the Lake Norman Marine Commission (LNMC) Activities for the third Quarter (Jan – Mar) of the fiscal year ending on June 30, 2024.

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, that are residents of NC. We continue to support all boater education classes and have posted an updated comprehensive list of all education opportunities available throughout the year on our website at lnmc.org. Boating knowledge for rentals continues to be a concern and we are encouraging boat rental companies to conduct some form of training prior to renting boats on Lake Norman. We are providing rental companies and marinas with copies of our brochure that details the boating safety laws and requirements in NC.

B. Boater Education

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

In February we participated with a booth at the annual Mid-Atlantic Boat Show in Charlotte to provide information and interact with the public on questions and concerns about the lake. Many new residents and new boat owners visited us.

In March we held a Fire, Emergency, Medical training session with the Denver Fire Department and Lincoln County EMS and 911 staffs for lake Captains, commercial operators, and public. It covered most of the emergencies that can occur onboard, with simulations and hands-on exercises.

C. No-Wake Issues

The new Marine Commission buoy application process is on our website under Laws & Regulations, No Wake Buoy Permit Application. Very few requests have been received 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 continue to distribute our updated Lake Norman map which indicates areas for water sports activities that show wake surfing must be conducted at least 200 feet from docks and structures on the lake and that no wake speeds should be observed in this area per state law.

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 have upgraded Markers that had faded signs for better visibility. A list of all markers requiring repair is maintained on our website under "ATON Report to Boaters". We partner with several groups on ongoing surveys of all lake markers to determine any needed repairs.

E. PFD Distribution Program

Each year Lake Norman has fatalities due to individuals entering the water without a PFD (Personnel Floatation Device, Life Jacket) available. The state Safe Boating law requires that everyone on a vessel have a properly fitting PFD and anyone under the age of 13 must be wearing the PFD while a vessel is underway. Law enforcement has reported that violations of this requirement occur because boaters do not have the proper equipment, especially for inexperienced boaters.

The Marine Commission has provided PFD's from infant through adult 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. The Commission provided 250 PFD's in 2023 and is budgeted to continue the program in 2024.

F. Dock Floatation / 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 developing plans to continue our program of giving free lifesaving rings to be

added to personal docks in the 2024 season. We are seeking a new source and funding before a purchase is made.

2. ENVIRONMENTAL & PUBLIC RECREATION

A. Aquatic Growth Management

The 2018 outbreak of hydrilla growth was eliminated by the stocking of 22,500 sterile grass carp in the spring of 2018 & 2019 and maintenance stocking of 750 grass carp each year since then.. An NC State survey in fall of 2023 found a small infestation of hydrilla in the North end of the lake in a very shallow area where carp cannot reach. We met NC Department of Environmental Quality Weed Council in January and agreed to stock another 750 carp this year as part of the ongoing morbidity study, and to treat the North end patch with herbicide.

Lyngbya, a blue-green alga that can form dense mats on the surface of waterbodies, was discovered in the last Fall survey. It is very difficult to control. Homeowners and Duke worked with us to survey the problem which had spread to approximately ten acres. The issue received a large amount of publicity at public meetings extensively covered by the media in January. All Counties, Duke and Charlotte Water quickly responded in February to the Marine Commission's request for funding to cover the costs of the initial applications which need to start in April. Our Environmental Committee is working with NC State to finalize the plan and administer the program.

B. Recreation & Boating

We continue to see an increase in lake traffic and a record number of boat sales. 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 all lake county enforcement officers and NC Wildlife Resources Commission to enhance boater safety and knowledge of boating safety laws. Our "Love Where You Lake" campaign is getting support from boat rental companies and marinas to display information that gives basic boater safety rules.

3. 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, picking up passengers 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.
- B. No Wake Buoy Ordinance: The Commissioners approved a revised procedure for requesting a No Wake Buoy. The procedure and permit application are on our website at Inmc.org. The procedure involves review by a buoy committee and NC Wildlife Resources Commission prior to consideration by the Marine Commission.

- C. 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.
- D. Rental Boat Regulation: A new regulation to insure the safety of rental boats went into effect January 1, 2024. It requires vessel registration and inspection, insurance, and training for renters, including a pre-rental checklist. During the quarter we added an online registration process to our website to handle the large number of applications anticipated. We also conducted two sessions to train vessel renters and charters on requirements and the inspection process.
- E. Shoreline Management Plan We met twice in the quarter with Duke Energy to provide input to the proposed changes to the Duke Shoreline Management Plan. This governs all activities along the shoreline of Lake Norman. The SMP must be updated and sent to the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) every 10 years, with the next revision due in 2025. Duke has set up a stakeholder group, which includes LNMC, to help identify changes needed. Periodic meetings will be held for review of proposed changes, and these will be sent out to Commissioners and the public for comment.

4. ADMINISTRATIVE

A. County Communication

In February we convened a meeting of all County Managers and Commission Chairs and Commissioners, Duke Energy, Charlotte Water, and citizens to provide an update to the Lyngbya plan they had funded and an update on all of our key initiatives. It was a very good exchange and we are planning similar sessions in the future.

B. Communication / Website

The Marine Commission website at Inmc.org has been upgraded to provide links to any information that would be useful to boaters operating in Lake Norman as well as residents and owners. Usage statistics show the number of people accessing our website continues to grow year over year.

The website also includes minutes from the past Marine Commission meetings and the agenda for the next scheduled public meeting. Our meetings are at the Charles Mack Citizens Center on the second Monday of each month at 7pm..

Please contact me if you have any questions about the Marine Commission.



David Scott
Executive Director