

BOATING NOTES FOR LAKE MARTIN

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Note to the reader: This article is not the usual verbiage you read in the Marine Police handbook, boating magazines, or boat owner manuals. Learn the rules in the authoritative manuals and consider the following suggestions as a great way to improve your boating skills on Lake Martin.

First, the author needs to qualify himself. These boating suggestions are based on 43 years of boating experience that include over 20 years on Lake Martin and over 20 years of coastal boating in larger craft that included crossing the Gulf, running the intercoastal waterways, rivers, canals, and bayous.

Boats are not cheap to own and operate, and misuse can be expensive or deadly, as we have seen just in the last month on our Lake. Being able to afford a boat does NOT make you a good boater. Heed these suggestions and be a better boater:

Boater vs Boat Driver: Owning an expensive new boat does not qualify anyone to be called a boater. A boater knows the rules and follows them, makes certain he operates the boat safely for his passengers and others on the Lake. A boat driver does none of these things.

Boats Do Not Have Brakes: Learn this fact before you make an expensive or fatal mistake. Boaters should always approach other boats, docks, and swimmers at idle speed, which means absolutely no wake.

No Wake: Boat drivers, look behind your boat at slow speeds. Do you see any waves behind your boat? If you do, slow down until you see no waves. Boaters know what **No Wake** means. Wake boat drivers seem to have a special problem with this important rule, probably because wake boats carry tons of extra water on board. Also, consider any boat operation within 200 feet of any dock or shoreline to be **No Wake**.

Keep Your Distance From Other Boats: On our Lake there are over 7,500 homes which means there are thousands more boats and PWCs. On weekends you will be meeting, passing, and interacting with boats. Keep your distance, because you don't know where the other boater plans go next. Do not trust any boat driver to know how to be a boater.

Docking Lights vs Head Lights: Most pontoon boats today have docking lights. No, they are not head lights. In the middle of the lake at night, docking lights serve no purpose, except to

blind the boater approaching you. Spot lights are much worse and are a sure sign of a boat driver.

Boating At Night: Boating at night can be a very rewarding experience with all the shoreline lights, cool night air, and the excitement of putting your life on the line, but the author does not venture out on the lake on weekends, because there are too many boat drivers who think it's fun to scare his passengers to death by running 40 miles an hour when he can't see 50 feet in front of the boat. Do not ride a PWC at night, it is against the law, and it's a great way to die quickly.

Keep Passengers Inside The Boat: Boaters know how dangerous it is for passengers to sit on the bow of any boat or pontoon with their legs hanging over the side. It is against the law and leads to many deaths, especially on pontoon boats. You can imagine what would happen with a child who falls forward when the boat hits a wake.

Drinking Boat Drivers: Everyone has heard the joke about the redneck who says, "here hold my beer, and watch this!" This joke probably applies more to boat drivers than to any other group of drinkers. Alcohol, sunshine, heat, fun, and picnicking in the boat is great, but the boater becomes a boat driver when any form of alcohol influences his ability to operate a boat. Our Lake has recently experienced a death and at least one injury in a three boat accident involving alcohol. It should not have happened. Be safe and be a real BOATER.

Announcements: The Lake has a new outdoor church service available. Through a joint effort of New Waters and Dadeville First Methodist Church an early morning contemporary service at 8:30 AM is being conducted at the New Waters Pavilion on the banks of the lake. The service is a non-denominational and boaters are welcome. New Waters occupies the old Civitan property off County Road 34, on Sandy Creek. Services will be conducted each Sunday through September.

Also, the HOBBO Annual Meeting in March was a great success. Moving the meeting date from busy May to cool March helped to significantly increase attendance, and interest.

The Lake Harris (Wedowee) FERC Relicensing effort is progressing as planned. The Lake Martin HOBBOs are participating in the various studies that impact Lake Martin and will keep members up to date on the multi-year process. The final FERC approved Study Plan can be reviewed on the HOBBO website at <https://www.lakemartinhobos.com/>

