

Press release from the Town of Lake Lure
For Immediate Release (ISSUED 2005)
A Commentary on the Management of Lake Lure

The Town of Lake Lure is making every effort to be a responsible owner and manager of their lake. As owners of the artificial water body known as Lake Lure, the Town Council and Lake Lure Marine Commission have followed in the footsteps of previous town leaders with pro-active management of the community's most valuable resource - the lake. The town has been examining the lake's boating carrying capacity for nearly two decades. Because of the current building boom, the marine commission has now made the commitment to restrict the total number of boat permits available to commercial operations in 2005 and for recreational boaters in 2006. The recently adopted commercial limitations are based on management practices employed by other privately or publicly owned lakes and on data from studies performed by the U.S. Coast Guard, the EPA, the Army Corps of Engineers, the Department of the Interior and the Town's Lake Advisory Committee - which conducted the 2001 Lake Lure Lake Use Study. The study concluded, from data and a survey of the citizens, that action was needed to address the constraints of time and space and the impact of different boating activities in the current environment of dramatic growth. The town plans to hire a recreation resource management consultant who will assist the commission as they fine tune the new regulations and consider any future action.

Boating regulations are only a small part of the town's lake management responsibility. The taxpaying citizens of Lake Lure underwrite the majority of the operating expenses of their multi-million dollar facility. Below is a sampling of the issues that have been and continue to be addressed

- Sedimentation from the 95 square mile watershed deposits more than 40,000 tons of material into the lake each year. Ongoing maintenance dredging is critical to preserving the lake's health, power generating capacity and navigability.
- Owning an impoundment (dam) is a complex management challenge. Beyond the maintenance demanded by a 75 year old concrete structure that contains the millions of gallons of water; meeting the federal and state requirements for the dam's operation is a task requiring the attention of the dam operator, his assistant and the town manager.
- Preparing for floods requires engineering models that are submitted to the NC Dam Safety Engineer. The town manager and emergency coordinator carefully orchestrate the flood control measures throughout the storms. The town's maintenance department organizes and provides the massive cleanup of the floating and submerged debris in the wake of any flood.
- To insure water quality, a sewer system was constructed under the lake before it was filled in the 1920's. Like the dam - this 75 year old infrastructure facility requires an inordinate amount of maintenance.
- With well over 600 lakefront homes on the 20 mile shoreline and 1,200 motorized boats permitted annually, a state-of-the-art fireboat has been added to the fire department's fleet of firefighting vehicles to respond to lakefront or marine emergencies.

- The Lake Lure Police Department operates a patrol boat and provides the primary enforcement coverage on the lake.
- The local EMS operates an emergency response craft that stays permanently moored on the lake.
- 911 addressing of all lake structures has been implemented and funded by the lake front property owners to speed response time to any emergencies on the water or shore.
- Regulations regarding lake structures control the standards and sizes of the walls, docks, boathouses and marinas that are constructed along the shoreline. The town's administration issues permits for the structures and enforces these regulations.
- Nearly five dozen waterway markers are strategically placed and maintained around the shoreline by the town's maintenance department to define the 75 foot safety buffer and to mark "slow, no-wake" coves.
- The town supports an ongoing monthly sampling of the lake and its tributaries which has created a decade of water quality information that assists in monitoring sources of pollutants.
- A sediment control specialist promotes the use of best management practices by residents and developers in the region with funding from the town and the Upper Broad River Watershed Protection Agency.
- The town assumed the management of the lake's fishery from the NC Wildlife Resources Commission over ten years ago. Since that time, the town has spent almost \$100,000 to stock the lake with thousands of game fish. Two out of every three years, the lake is kept at full pond year-round to allow for boating and fishing opportunities as well as improving the fishery habitat.
- Recognizing the seasonal surge in boating density, the town has created off-season opportunities for non-residents of Lake Lure to enjoy recreational boating and fishing.
- Liability Insurance requirements for boat permit applicants has been added to the town's lake use regulations for the same reasons that the state requires it for motor vehicle licensing. The big difference between the lake and the highway is the absence of an uninsured boaters' insurance pool to rescue (provide coverage for?) victims of accidents involving a boater without insurance coverage.
- A comprehensive lake management plan was created for Lake Lure in 1999 and provides a useful tool in preserving continuity from one administration to another for the manager/council form of government.

Like the calm appearance of a water body on a still day hiding the dramatic forces of nature that exist below, a lake is beautiful to behold and incredibly challenging to properly manage. The Town of Lake Lure is fortunate to have a dedicated group of administrators, elected officials, emergency/enforcement personnel and volunteers who are willing to look beyond the surface and extend a higher level of stewardship as caretakers of the centerpiece of their community.

Points we may wish to amplify:

- Enacting limits on boating usage is a necessary and prudent approach to the town's stewardship of the lake. As experienced on other lakes in the country, unchecked growth and usage will lead to unsafe and unattractive conditions for all.

- You generally don't want a press release leaving people with additional questions. The statements below are the only ones that address the eventual residential cap. Will this fuel speculation and angst about how the residential restrictions might work? Maybe a more specific statement about our plans would help...do we aim to have a proposal by November? Will there be public review and comment? Will current "rights" to lake usage be preserved? If there were some positive statements we could make that could help put people at ease...that could be a good thing.

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There's a reference to the "*recently adopted commercial limitations*", but no further explanation. We discussed that there has been a significant amount of misinformation, rumor or misinterpretation concerning the new commercial regulations. One way to address this is to issue a press release summarizing the intent, the regulations and the results from the Marine Commission. If we want to do this, it might be more effective in a second press release (to be issued at the same time). Something like:

An overview of the regulation of commercial boating activities on Lake Lure:

1. Effective for the 2005 season, businesses intending to operate a commercial boating activity on Lake Lure must file an application and meet minimum criteria established by the Marine Commission. This criterion specifies requirements for liability insurance and operator training. (Outline other criteria or not?)

2. An available commercial boating capacity on the lake is reserved for each of 7 activity types (e.g., tour boats, fishing guides, rental boats).
3. When commercial demand exceeds the capacity established by the Marine Commission, preference will be given to local businesses and to oldest businesses first.
4. All applications are reviewed and the impact of each operation is estimated. Each boat's anticipated hours on the water and space requirements for its desired activity are compared to the available capacity.
5. For the 2005 season, 35 commercial licenses were approved, totaling 71 motorized boats and 72 non-motorized.
6. Approved commercial license holders also have new responsibilities on the lake. Boats over 100hp must carry boat-to-shore communications and all commercial