Boating Courtesy Discussed at SMLA Annual Meeting

By Sherese Gore – Smith Mountain Eagle

A phrase the Smith Mountain Lake Association uses is “watch your wake, share the lake,” said SMLA member Randy Stow last week.

Boating courtesy was a topic discussed at the 2019 Smith Mountain Lake Association Annual Meeting on Thursday. The gathering, held at Trinity Ecumenical Parish, was open to the community.

“Boating courtesy is recognizing how our behavior impacts others and then operating in a way to minimize adverse conditions,” Stow said.

Stow noted the Water Sports Industry Association advocates for a buffer of at least 200 feet from docks and shorelines; other stances urge boaters to be mindful of the volume of their music and avoid operating in the same area.

Stow said that SMLA is trying to reinforce the same message through education, billboards and banners, such as those posted at certain marinas around the lake that urge boaters to “wake responsibly.”

The SMLA also wants to call attention to certain actions such as driving in circles or bass boats that start a rapid acceleration in tight coves, he said.

“Know your wake-producing profile, and share with others in a non-confrontational way,” Stow said. “Social pressure can be a game changer. And also remember that the normal rules of the road … still apply when you’re engaged in towed waters ports.”

The Tri-County Lakes Administrative Commission (TLAC) has a wake incident report on its website (<https://sml.us.com/>), and a link on the SMLA website connects to that form. While there are numerous verbal anecdotes about wakes, there are few report, Stow said, addition that “it may very well be tie to pursue some legislation, if that’s true; we need the documentation from the community.”

There have been numerous injuries at Smith Mountain Lake that involve tubers or skiers running into docks. Recognizing the increase in towed watersports, it also may be time to “establish a statewide, formal regulated distance between these kinds of operations and docks, structures and people in the water,” Stow said.

“That may well be our next step,” he added.

Several awards were given out at the annual meeting.

Former SMLA president Larry Iceman, who died April 30, was honored for his efforts at Smith Mountain Lake with a resolution from the Virginia House of Delegates. The resolution, read by Del. Charles Poindexter, R-Glade Hill, was presented to Larry’s widow, Beatrice.

The Melvin S. Johnston Citizen Volunteer Award was given to Slim and Jane Crawford for their leadership of the Scruggs Volunteer Fire and Rescue department. Slim Crawford, who served as the department’s chief for more than 40 years, died May 23. Jane Crawford continues to serve as Captain.

The Karl Martin Water Safety Award was given to former SMLA president Bruce Dungan for his advocacy towards the improvement of boating safety.

The SML Water Safety Council Lifesaving Award was given to Sonny Daniels, a deputy with the Bedford County Sheriff’s Office, and surgical technician Brandi Hudson. Daniels and Hudson performed CPR on a one-year old child in distress at Smith Mountain Lake State Park in August 2018.