



SMITH MOUNTAIN LAKE ASSOCIATION

400 Scruggs Road, Suite 2100, Moneta, VA 24121

Website: www.SMLAssociation.org Phone: 540-719-0690

Protecting the Lake and Promoting Safe Recreation

Lake Matters: Summer 2020

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Smith Mountain Lake Association stands committed to serve our mission **to protect the water of Smith Mountain Lake and promote safe recreation**. One of our core values is to monitor and protect our lake's water quality. It is this core value that I'd like to discuss with you today.

Stressful times like these make me thankful that I live on Smith Mountain Lake. We are more than happy to be here in the Jewel of the Blue Ridge amongst nature, its tranquility and beauty. But not everything here has been perfect. This Spring we have experienced 3 significant heavy rain, high-water events that have wreaked havoc in many neighborhoods and communities with debris completely covered sections of the upper lake arms shore to shore. Coves have been filled with logs, branches, construction materials, trash and shoreline debris such as mulch, leaves and pine straw. This year, more than any other that I can recall, SML needed a cleanup event under Take Pride in Smith Mountain Lake. But an unseen virus stopped us in our tracks. The Take Pride event was cancelled due to the Governor's Covid-19 restrictions.

Another byproduct of the heavy rains was a high inflow of nutrients and pollutants from streams, shorelines, and the river watershed that has caused bright green algae bloom sightings all around the lake. Coincidentally, this was occurring at the same time that SMLA conducts water quality monitoring in conjunction with Ferrum College's Environmental Science Department. 50 volunteers, Ferrum staff and students sample from 84 sites around the lake to track water quality trends of key water factors for the past 34 years. Sampling from this program, as well as samples submitted by concerned neighbors, has revealed that this particular alga is indeed a variety of Blue-Green algae, really a bacterium, that can produce toxins. High concentrations can be hazardous to humans and pets. The alga has mostly "disappeared" from the surface. Few, if any sightings of bright green swirls remain, but this species of alga lives in the water column below the surface. As long as additional nutrients do not enter the lake, this alga should die off relatively quickly. Remember not to swim where high concentrations of algae are present, and by all means, shower after swimming.

While nature indeed has had a significant hand in these incidents, lake residents should be aware of our own contributions to the problem from shoreline development. Consequently, we all need to take responsible measures to mitigate both the debris and the nutrients. Residents within the Indian Point area took the initiative to conduct their own cleanup. Responding to our mission, SMLA has solicited neighborhood volunteers to clear their coves of debris and provide dumpsters for these communities to facilitate gaining safe access to recreational waters. Cleanup efforts by communities with help from SMLA volunteers and AEP will handle much of the debris. AEP continues to remove thousands of tons from the lake, but residents can continue to clean their shoreline where branches may accumulate so they don't refloat with high water or waves.

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Please be sure to let us know if you have a change of address or contact information. You can reach us at 540-719-0690 or via eMail at theoffice@smlassociation.org

The SMLA office is located in The Plaza on Scruggs Road in the lower level, beside the Discovery Shop Annex.

Due to Covid 2019 office hours are limited to two days only.

Teresa Picking, Office Administrator, is in the office on Tuesday, and Thursday from 8:30 to 4:30.

The US Environmental Protection Agency has reported that runoff from lawns, roads and rooftops is a primary cause of pollution in our waterways. The extra fertilizer from lawns, oil and gas from driveways, soil from building sites, litter, pesticides, herbicides and salt are major pollutants. The easiest path for these pollutants to access our pristine water is across our grass. Here at the lake, phosphorous levels have risen 200% since 2012 – a clear indication of increasing nutrients. Installing a buffer garden is the best way to prevent the nutrients from your fertilized yard from entering the lake. Our Master Gardeners and Naturalist volunteers can survey your shoreline and recommend the best practices for creating a nutrient barrier. If you are interested in learning more about Buffer Gardening, please contact SMLA at 540-719-0690 or e mail us at theoffice@smlassociation.org.

These unselfish volunteer measures require your support. Being the steward of the lake takes much time and many resources – both financial and manpower. Membership and charitable donations support the good work of SMLA, so we need your help to continue our mission **to protect the water of Smith Mountain Lake and promote safe recreation**. As we continue this mission, it is our hope is that you will encourage friends and neighbors to join our team. SMLA is always looking for assistance in managing and conducting our programs. Please visit our website for more information on the work that SMLA performs or how you can support our continued efforts to ensuring that our water remains pristine at www.smlassociation.org.

The “Jewel” is a bit cloudy these days. I urge you to engage, get involved, and continue to provide your needed support to our organization. We can’t do it without you. It is our best and most efficient insurance for maintaining our property values and preserving our treasure.

Kindest regards,

John Rupnik

John Rupnik, President

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: **SAVE THE DATE: SMLA Annual Meeting** :
: **Tuesday, September 29, 2020 —More information on page 8** :
.....

* The **Vessel Pump Out Program** continues this season with 120 boats serviced and 2,372 *
* gallons of effluent removed to date. *
* **Projected end service date: September 13, 2020** *
* Your donation to the Vessel Pump Out Program help us keep human waste from being *
* discharged into the lake. No one wants this to happen in their cove, near their property, or where *
* they swim! Your contributions help us pay for this costly program, which is offered free to boat *
* owners. *

NOTICES & REMINDERS FOR BOATERS FROM THE WSC

Following recent significant rain events, there is a lot of debris in the Lake—swept into coves and main channels by run-off and resulting high-water levels. To make things worse, our annual Take Pride event—which usually removes tons of hazardous trash and debris from the lake, was canceled due to COVID19 concerns.

AEP has crews working to remove floating navigational hazards from the Roanoke and Blackwater rivers and Leesville Lake. But boaters who do encounter floating logs and other trash should steer clear. Confident boat handlers can carry a length of old line or ski rope they can use to secure hazardous items to undeveloped shoreline. Then call AEP or TLAC and report the debris location. Another helpful action is “Take Pride in Your Neighborhood” by organizing a socially-distanced shoreline clean-up. Plan ahead for how collected debris will be consolidated and transported to a suitable disposal facility.

Safely enjoying our lake in this environment calls for extra vigilance. The captain must stay continuously alert to floating debris. Assigning a crew member to act as an extra lookout makes especially good sense at this time. With increased possibility of a debris strike, smart operators will connect the vessel's kill switch lanyard to their life vests so, should they be ejected, the vessel will stop instantaneously rather than continuing on to leave them stranded and potentially collide with a dock, shoreline, swimmer or other vessel.

A couple of warm weekends in May have brought out the boat traffic and, yes, paddlers, swimmers, tubers, skiers, and wake surfers. Remember that the water is still cool and swimmers lose heat and tire more quickly. Be courteous of others using our lake and wear your life jackets.

Stay Safe and Enjoy! Patrick Massa, Chairman

WATER SAFETY NOTES: "I SPEAK FOR THE LITTLE PEOPLE!"

One of my favorite authors and story characters are Theodor Seuss Geisel (Dr. Seuss) and his protective little creature "The Lorax". When the Lorax has seen enough of the devastation of the forests he gets up on a tree stump and commands, "I am the Lorax and I speak for the trees!" Well, neighbors and guests, as your Water Safety Council (WSC) we are compelled to speak for the human-powered small craft and the swimmers; the "Little self-propelled People" creating no wakes all over the little places of Smith Mountain Lake (SML). After the previous year of incident reporting and last two years of trending, we need to "talk" so pull up a soap box while I climb up on a stump.

Who are these "Little People" anyway? They come in all ages and skill levels from 5 to 95 years young. Many are youth experiencing their first tastes of freedom and Command at Sea. Little People could care less about the price of gas for they provide their own power. Their goals are adventure, physical and mental well being, and a little peace and harmony with the beauty of the lake. Some are even scholastic and collegiate athletes.

If you watch, social distancing has the Little People popping out all over the lake now long before the traditional watercraft season of Memorial Day to Labor Day. They are out in canoes, kayaks, rowing shells, and skiffs. The elusive wet-suited paddle boarder has even been spotted. Most following one another like little ducks...six feet apart of course! Yes, those young people at the end of the whip being towed behind power craft, they count as Little People too.

As an indicator of the potential magnitude of small craft we sight-surveyed 100 docks and found there are more human-powered craft visible than powered craft by nearly two to one. In sheer numbers, the Little People win!

Then comes along the "Big People" who finally figured out they too could quarantine themselves with their floating amenities, gross tonnage and motors. They also headed off into the little places of SML amidst the spring bass and striper fishers and least we forget, the Little People. The seasonal water use, wake hazard and traffic density conflicts in the tight-spots of SML now unfold two months early in 2020. A sign of the bigger concern we all have to help mitigate.

While we celebrated 2019 as a year with no fatalities on our lake, the Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries and our Fire and Rescue Teams noted an increasing trend over the last two years in the number of incidents reported and in 2019 ranked SML number two for incidents in the State. An incident is a death, serious injury or significant property damage. The close calls don't frequently get reported, but your SMLWSC has many ears to the water and the things we learn scare the compost out of us.

Too many of those incidents and "close ones" involved interactions between our Little and Big People in constrained and restricted areas such as creeks, coves, private docks and the boundaries of NO WAKE areas. Yes, the safer places for small craft to venture and where swimmers are found. We also faced tragedy when children being towed behind power craft in creeks and coves were swung on the end of the tow rope striking docks and colliding with each other.

A few reminders and some well learned common sense for us all:

- **Big People** maintain a vigilant look out ahead to see and avoid small craft and swimmers. Take an observer along if you are towing or skiing. Pay attention to swimmers near docks and people on floating docks. Be especially concerned about children and elderly in the water and on floaters.
- **Big People** slow down in creeks, coves and narrows. Fast movers increase risks in tight areas. **NO WAKE WITHIN 50 FEET MEANS NO WAKE GENERATED PERIOD.** Most docks extend 36' to 42' off shore. You have to be 50' from the dock before you can generate a wake. That means maybe 100' off the shore. Are you closer to the other side of that creek or cove now? Do you really have safe distance to turn about?
- **Big People** remember human-powered and sailing craft have the right of way over powered craft. Even a relatively small wake to a power boater presents a risk to small craft.
- **Little People** wear visible clothing and life vests. If buying a small craft, pick hull or board color that can be seen easily in low light and against a rising and setting sun.
- **Little People** avoid mid-channel travel and don't push low light conditions. No lights, no night.

Like the Lorax, we all want to save what is precious to ourselves and our younger generations. We need each other's help on this one. After all, most of us are Big People one day and Little People the next if you are "Lake People." A little kindness, courtesy, common sense and honoring the water safety regulations gets us all safely home.

Stay well and look out for the safety of each other on SML.

Submitted on behalf of the SMLWSC by "Little People" Representative, C. E. Smith

SUMMER IS HERE! WATER QUALITY MONITORING HAS RESUMED

The 2020 Smith Mountain Lake Water Quality Monitoring season kicked off the first week of June, as usual, well...almost. This year is unlike any other. Pandemics and floods may slow us down a bit, but they have not stopped us in our efforts to monitor and protect this beautiful place we call home. First, the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic and then came the flood of 2020. Both of these events caused us to stop and fully reconsider the safety of our Water Quality Monitors.

Covid-19 pandemic requires social distancing to be safe. The vast majority of the SMLA water monitoring teams are made up of people who live together, mostly married couples for whom social distancing is not an issue. For the small number of monitors to do sampling with friends, we asked that they observe social distancing or wear masks to stay safe. By the very nature of our monitoring program, our monitors while collecting the samples on their boats are away from other people. Once samples are taken, they are placed in the freezer at home until the day they are collected. Then a cooler with the samples is put outside (usually on the front porch) where Ferrum College interns collect them without having any interaction with the monitors.

The recent flood at SML brought with it a tremendous amount of debris. Water Quality Sampling was to start the last week of May, but due to unsafe conditions due to the debris, SMLA and Ferrum College jointly agreed to move the schedule for this season back by one week.

Some Good News: The first Bacteria Sampling of the year was done by personnel from Ferrum College on June 2nd and we are very happy to report that none of the sites tested around the lake had E. coli exceeding the Virginia Department of Health standard for recreational waters.

Regrettably, SMLA’s bid with the Virginia Environmental Endowment to implement a Smart Lake concept using remote sensors was not successful. SMLA will try again next year in a scaled-down version.

Water monitoring is SMLA’s primary method to protect the water of Smith Mountain Lake, and we do our very best to provide you with our results throughout the season and with a summary report at the end of the year.

Membership and charitable donations support the good work of SMLA so we need your help to continue our mission to protect the water of Smith Mountain Lake. Please visit our website for more information on the work that SMLA performs or how you can support our continued efforts at www.smlassociation.org. It is our best and most efficient insurance for maintaining our property values and preserving our treasure—The Jewel of the Blue Ridge.

Michael McCord, WQM Program Director

* **Do you shop at Kroger or Amazon? Are you designating 5% of your eligible pur-** *
* **chases to be donated to SMLA? It’s quick, easy, and won’t cost you one cent!** *
* **Email theoffice@smlassociation.org and we’ll send you step by step instructions.** *
* **Help us to help protect the lake!** *

New Debris Representative to AEP’s Debris Committee Appointed

Chris Bechtler, SMLA Board member and Director of Marine Operations at Crazy Horse Marina, has assumed the duties as SMLA’s rep to the AEP Debris Committee. In this role, Chris will:

- attend their annual meeting, review and comment on meeting minutes, make recommendations on where AEP Cleanup crews should focus their efforts, and report back to the SMLA Board of Directors on these activities;
- participate as a member of the Take Pride in SML Planning Committee, actively participate in the cleanup event;
- and seek innovative methods to encourage resident participation to remove debris in the lake.

Chris has routinely provided support to the Take Pride event every year offering a disposal site for volunteers to deposit debris collected. Chris will be assuming this position from Jim Corp. We thank Jim for his dedicated service, and are pleased that Jim will remain as the Habitat committee rep.

Volunteers are always welcome to serve on one or more committees. Become a “Steward of the Lake!”

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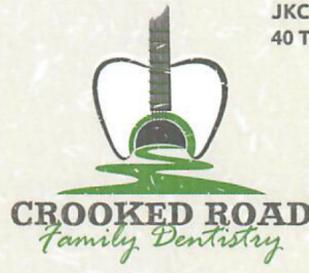
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Show your support for the lake and the work SMLA does to preserve it.

Email theoffice@smlassociation.com and ask for an application.

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Save the Date: 9/29/20

2016 Annual Meeting

Due to Covid19 concerns, we will be holding our Annual Membership Meeting, provided in a Zoom Webinar format on Tuesday, September 29, 2020 at 5 o'clock. Pull up your computer and join us with a beverage of your choice and your favorite snack for an hour of Smith Mountain Lake Association's newsworthy accomplishments and opportunities. As always, door prizes will be awarded from attendees and posted on our FB page the following day, Look for more information by eBlast and FB post.

If you have not already loaded the Zoom ap you will need to do so in advance.

As always, this event is free and open to the public.

