



Fiscal Note for Lake Norman Boating Safety Rule

15A NCAC 10F .0307 - CATAWBA, IREDELL, LINCOLN, AND MECKLENBURG COUNTIES

Agency Contact: William Casola
Policy Analyst
NC Wildlife Resources Commission
1751 Varsity Drive
Raleigh, NC 27606
(919) 707-0125
william.casola@ncwildlife.gov

Fiscal Impact: State Government: No
Local Government: Minimal
Private Impact: Minimal
Substantial Economic Impact: No

Authority: G.S. 75A 3; 75A 15

Background

The proposed amendments to Rule 15A NCAC 10F .0307 provide a defined framework for safety requirements that will apply to vessel liveries in Lake Norman. This framework is intended to make enforcement of boating safety requirements more consistent and streamlined, ultimately enhancing public safety.

“Vessel livery” refers to a business that provides boats for people to rent and use for recreational activities on the lake, typically on a daily or hourly basis. Several agencies share responsibility for enforcing boating safety on Lake Norman. The Charlotte-Mecklenburg Police Department operates a full-time Lake Enforcement Unit that patrols Lake Norman year-round. The North Carolina Wildlife Resources Commission (WRC) enforces boating laws on all public waters,

including Lake Norman. Additionally, the Iredell, Catawba, and Lincoln County Sheriff's Offices, along with the Cornelius Police Department, maintain lake patrol units. The Lake Norman Marine Commission also plays a key role in regulating activities, monitoring the lake and supporting enforcement efforts.

The WRC has been made aware of safety concerns and enforcement challenges surrounding vessel liveries on Lake Norman. Although the Lake Norman Marine Commission has the authority to establish regulations for public recreation and water safety, effective enforcement has been challenging without a joint resolution, as required by S.L. 1969-1089, or regulations formally codified in Rule. This has resulted in limited action against vessel liveries and increased safety concerns among lake users.

A temporary version of this rule is currently in effect, having been adopted by the WRC and taking effect on March 7, 2025.

Proposed Rule Amendments

The proposed amendments will require vessel liveries operating on Lake Norman to:

- **Conduct a pre-rental vessel inspection.**
 - Ensure all required safety equipment is present and accessible on each vessel before rental.
- **Instruct renters on safe vessel operation.**
 - Instructions must include navigation rules, operating restrictions, use of an electronic or waterproof navigational map of Lake Norman, and a review of the U.S. Coast Guard's Aids to Navigation System pamphlet.
- **Provide and keep documentation.**
 - Liveries must document that the vessel inspection and renter instruction steps were completed. Both the livery and renter must sign and date documentation confirming these steps were completed. In addition, the livery must keep this documentation for two years and provide it to law enforcement upon request. Note that the proposed rule does not specify a required format -- electronic or paper documentation is acceptable. Renters must be provided a copy to keep on board during the rental period for law enforcement inspection.

Fiscal Impact

State Impact

The proposed amendments are anticipated to have no impact on State government. The proposed changes require livery companies to keep records that are available to law enforcement for

review if needed. Record review is not anticipated to occur frequently but is part of normal law enforcement operations.

Local Impact

The proposed amendments are anticipated to have small, but meaningful impacts on local governments, particularly lake patrol units. The following four local law enforcement agencies patrol Lake Norman:

- Iredell County
- Catawba County
- Lincoln County
- Town of Cornelius

Proposed changes codify requirements which will promote more consistent regulation of and enforcement on livery companies. By mandating pre-rental inspections and safety briefings, the changes will help ensure that all vessels are properly equipped and renters are informed about safe operation. This is expected to enhance boater safety on the lake, potentially reducing the need for law enforcement involvement.

The requirements for both the vessel renters and the liveries to have documentation on hand will enable patrol officers to more quickly check documentation to confirm compliance, both with the liveries and on the water with renters.

While the WRC is unable to quantify these benefits, improvements over the current situation are expected to yield incremental gains in enforcement efficiency, effectiveness, and overall safety on Lake Norman.

Private Impact

The agency believes that some liveries are likely already performing these safety instructions and vessel inspections prior to renting due to their own diligence or through requirements of insurers. Livery companies not already in compliance with proposed requirements may need to spend additional time preparing documentation and reviewing the safety requirements with each customer prior to relinquishing control of the vessel. There will be no required additional costs associated with providing navigational maps as an electronic version is available at no charge on the Lake Norman Marine Commission website¹ (waterproof maps can be purchased for a flat \$5.00 postage fee).

Boat renters may spend additional time reviewing operating and safety procedures before taking the boat on the lake. However, the proposed requirements are anticipated to benefit all lake users

¹ [2023 Updated Lake Norman Waterproof Maps and Digital Maps - Lake Norman Marine Commission](#)

by creating a safer environment for recreation. With better-informed renters and properly equipped vessels, the risk of accidents and safety violations may decrease.

As of 2024, the Lake Norman Marine Commission had approved 47 boat rental companies on the lake.² However, the WRC does not know how many individuals rent vessels on the lake each year. Thus, the WRC does not have a mechanism to quantify the specific impacts of the proposed change on private entities. Lake Norman is the largest man-made lake in North Carolina and is well known as one of the most popular lakes for boating and fishing.

Summary

This regulation establishes clear, enforceable standards for vessel liveries on Lake Norman which should promote incremental improvement to renter safety and regulatory compliance. Although this regulation introduces some additional administrative responsibilities for livery operators, the anticipated benefits from improved public safety, greater accountability, and more efficient enforcement are likely to outweigh these costs.

² [List of Charter and Rental Boats Approved by Lake Norman Marine Commission - Lake Norman Marine Commission](#)

1 **15A NCAC 10F .0307 CATAWBA, IREDELL, LINCOLN, AND MECKLENBURG COUNTIES**

2 (a) Regulated Area. This Rule shall apply to Lake Norman in Catawba, Iredell, Lincoln, and Mecklenburg counties:

- 3 (1) within 50 yards of the shoreline at Jetton Park in Mecklenburg County, from a point on the west
4 side of the park at 35.47082 N, 80.90427 W, south and around the point at 35.46703 N, 80.90360
5 W, then northeast to a point at 35.47262 N, 80.89727 W;
6 (2) Bluff Point Cove in Cornelius shore to shore, east of a line from a point 50 yards west of the south
7 shore of the cove mouth at 35.45327 N, 80.89520 W to a point 50 yards west of the north shore of
8 the cove mouth at 35.45487 N, 80.89440 W; and
9 (3) the cove immediately north of the inlet of Hager Creek in Iredell County, north of a line from a point
10 on the north shore at 35.55760 N, 80.94730 W southwest to a point on the island at the inlet of Hager
11 Creek at 35.55695 N, 80.94971 W, and east of a line from the same point on the island northwest to
12 a point on the north shore at 35.55754 N, 80.95029 W.

13 (b) Speed Limit. No person shall operate a vessel at greater than no wake speed within the regulated areas described
14 in Paragraph (a) of this Rule and as set forth in G.S. 75A-14.1.

15 ~~(c) Swimming Areas. No person operating or responsible for the operation of a vessel shall permit it to enter any~~
16 ~~marked swimming area on the waters of Lake Norman.~~

17 (c~~e~~) Placement and Maintenance of Markers. The Lake Norman Marine Commission shall be the designated agency
18 for placement and maintenance of navigational aids and regulatory markers on the waters of Lake Norman.

19 ~~(d) Vessel Liveries. Vessel liveries operating on Lake Norman shall conduct the following activities with each vessel~~
20 ~~renter prior to relinquishing control of the vessel:~~

- 21 ~~(1) a pre-rental vessel inspection to ensure that safety equipment required by Rule .0201 of this~~
22 ~~Subchapter is on board and accessible; and~~
23 ~~(2) provide and review instruction on safe operation of the vessel rented including review of navigation~~
24 ~~rules in G.S. 75A-6.1, operating restrictions in G.S. 75A-10, an electronic or waterproof~~
25 ~~navigational map of Lake Norman, and the U.S. Coast Guard's U.S. Aids to Navigation System~~
26 ~~pamphlet.~~

27 ~~Both parties shall sign and date documentation verifying adherence to these requirements on the date the rental~~
28 ~~begins. The vessel livery shall maintain a copy of this documentation for a period of two years from the date of rental~~
29 ~~which shall be made available to law enforcement officers upon request. The vessel renter shall have a copy of the~~
30 ~~documentation on the vessel and available for law enforcement upon demand during the term of the rental.~~

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32 History Note: Authority G.S. 75A-3; 75A-15;

33 Eff. February 1, 1976;

34 Amended Eff. July 1, 1998; October 1, 1992; May 1, 1989; March 25, 1978;

35 Pursuant to G.S. 150B-21.3A, rule is necessary without substantive public interest Eff. December
36 6, 2016;

37 Amended Eff. October 1, 2019; October 1, 2018.

