



NEWS RELEASE

U.S. ARMY CORPS OF ENGINEERS

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West Point Lake: USACE urges caution for Labor Day weekend

MOBILE, Ala. – The Labor Day holiday weekend signifies the traditional end of the summer season for many visitors at West Point Lake, and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers reminds all lake users to use caution when in or near the water.

Because of the dry weather, the reservoir level is projected to be some 5 - 6 feet below summer pool during Labor Day Weekend. Boaters should use caution and operate their vessels within the boating channels which are marked by buoys. Boaters are also advised to watch for submerged or partially submerged hazards.

“Most potential boating hazards are marked with white posts with reflective signs”, said Operations Manager Steve Logan. “But other, unmarked hazards like stumps or logs could be present at anytime of the year,” he said.

Boaters should also make sure that all safety equipment is on board and in working order before leaving the boat ramp. The U.S. Coast Guard Auxiliary will be conducting free vessel safety checks at various locations around the lake during the holiday weekend. To schedule a vessel safety check, contact Park Ranger Fred Matthies at 706-645-2937.

The most important rule to ensure safety in and around the water is to wear your life jacket. This message never changes, but most victims of water related accidents would have survived had they not ignored it. In fact, U.S. Coast Guard statistics reveal that 85 to 90 percent of those who drowned in serious boating accidents were not wearing life jackets, even though in many cases there were life jackets on board. One reason recreational boaters resist wearing life jackets is the belief that they are too cumbersome or uncomfortable to wear. Many boaters are surprised to learn that modern life jackets can be much lighter and less restrictive than older styles. New inflatable styles are as comfortable as a light vest - yet open instantly when immersed in water.

Another dangerous misconception is that stowed life jackets can be reached easily in an emergency. Boating accidents can happen very quickly, not allowing enough time to put on a life jacket. Life jackets for boaters serve the same purpose as do seat belts for vehicle operators. It is the responsibility of the vessel's captain or operator to see that all the people on the boat are properly fitted with a serviceable life jacket. In addition, Georgia State Law requires all children less than ten years of age wear a correctly sized life jacket while the vessel is under power.

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West Point 2-2-2

Life jackets should also be worn when swimming from the shoreline at West Point Lake. Because of the dry weather and the resulting low reservoir level, West Point's three designated swimming areas have little or no water within their buoy lines. The areas beyond the buoy lines have not been graded and may not have a smooth, hazard free bottom.

Swimmers are advised to stay close to shore avoid attempts to swim to navigation buoys. These buoys are much further out than they appear, and there is a risk swimmers may get hit by boats while attempting to go too far away from the shoreline.

Parents should keep a close eye on children and no one should swim alone. Life jackets are available for loan at each of the swimming areas. Visitors without life jackets may borrow one for use during their stay at the swimming area. To ensure a safe holiday weekend at West Point Lake, wear a life jacket when in or on the water!

For more specific information on this or any other issue related to the management of West Point Project, please contact the Project Management Office at 706-645-2937, or visit the West Point Lake website at <http://westpt.sam.usace.army.mil/>.

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