

LAKE MARTIN RESOURCE ASSOCIATION



LAKE MARTIN BUOY GUIDELINES



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Lake Martin Resource Association has prepared the following document to better educate boaters on Lake Martin about the significance of buoys and how to approach them. The following points should be considered when operating a water vessel:

- ◆ Buoys are placed to mark hazards under the authority of the Alabama Marine Police. LMRA places and maintains all buoys as a courtesy to the boaters on Lake Martin.
- ◆ Hazard buoys (identified by a red diamond on white background) mark underwater obstructions and are placed at the discretion of LMRA.
- ◆ No Wake and Boats Keep Out buoys (defined as Private buoys) must be authorized and permitted by the Marine Police.
- ◆ Boaters are advised to keep a distance of 100' from all hazard buoys and not navigate between buoys that are within 200' of each other. Failure to heed this warning may cause extreme danger to the boater.
- ◆ Buoys placed within 100' of the shoreline indicate shallow water or hazards between the buoy and the shore. Boaters are advised not to navigate between the buoy and shore.
- ◆ Boaters should not be on the lake after daylight hours without a good knowledge of the boating area. Only a few buoys on Lake Martin are lighted.
- ◆ LMRA will make a reasonable effort to identify and mark hazards at elevation 479' msl or higher and such hazards will be marked at the highest point of the hazard.
- ◆ During low water elevations, boaters should use extreme caution and boat only in areas in which they are familiar.
- ◆ Boaters should use common sense and good judgment at all times while operating a vessel.
- ◆ LMRA assumes no responsibility for damage or injury if a boater hits a buoy, pole marker or hazard, either marked or unmarked.
- ◆ Frequently, buoys are destroyed or move away from the hazard they are marking. LMRA requests that the public assist by contacting our office and reporting missing or damaged buoys. Phone 256-329-0835.
- ◆ The cost of buoy placement and maintenance is paid by LMRA member dues for the safety of all boaters. If you would like to join or assist with this program and enjoy the many benefits of membership, please see our website or contact Karen at 256-212-1422 for membership information. We welcome your membership. LMRA has been "Working for the betterment of Lake Martin since 1970".

For a more detailed description of the above bullet points, please review the following:

I. AUTHORITY:

Buoys are placed on Lake Martin by LMRA under the authority of Alabama Marine Police (AMP). Hazard markers are placed at the discretion of LMRA. Boats Keep Out or No Wake buoys must be specifically authorized by AMP. If LMRA receives a request for placement of either Boats Keep Out or No Wake buoys, the person making the request will be directed to contact AMP. If the request is approved by AMP, the buoy will then be placed by LMRA and there may be a charge for the buoy. See Sec. V below.

II. DEFINITION OF HAZARD:

A hazard is defined as any underwater obstruction that interferes with the safe navigation of a vessel on Lake Martin. This may include a rock, stump, sunken object, underwater shoal or any other item that would be harmful to navigation. A buoy or pole marker with a white background and a red diamond indicates a hazard. On Lake Martin, there are many underwater obstructions that qualify as a hazard. It is physically and financially impossible to locate and identify all such hazards. **LMRA assumes no liability for injury or damage caused by unmarked underwater hazards.**

III. SAFE BOATING REQUIREMENTS FOR AVOIDING HAZARDS:

Boating on Lake Martin requires that the boater use *common sense* and *good judgment* for safe navigation. Common sense would suggest that boaters stay a minimum of 100' away from a hazard marker in all directions. Boaters should not boat after daylight hours without a good knowledge of the boating area. Only a few hazard markers are identified by a strobe light. Where a hazard is identified by a buoy visible during daylight, that buoy/hazard may not be visible after dark. The boater is navigating at high risk if not completely familiar with the boating area. **The boat operator assumes all risk associated with boating. LMRA assumes no liability for damage or injury caused by boats hitting a buoy or pole marker.** It is unlawful to tie up to a hazard marker (buoy or pole marker).

IV. GUIDELINES FOR PLACEMENT OF HAZARD BUOYS:

1. DEPTH TO BE MARKED:

LMRA will make a reasonable effort to identify and mark hazards that are at a depth of 2' below the winter Flood Control Guide. Under the current Alabama Power Co Martin Dam License, the winter Flood Control Guide calls for an elevation of 481' (msl) (mean sea level). Therefore, the guide that LMRA will follow for buoy placement will be hazards at 479' (msl). If the Flood Control Guide is subsequently changed, LMRA will consider and may adjust accordingly.

2. SHOALS AND LAND POINTS:

There are many places on Lake Martin where a land point protrudes underwater laterally for 50' to 200' or more feet from the visible land point. LMRA will mark these hazards at approximately 100' from the visible land at full pool. Boaters are advised that navigation should not proceed between the buoy and the visible land point without high risk. There are many places on Lake Martin where there is a totally submerged island that is hazardous to navigation. LMRA will mark these locations at the highest point on the submerged island with either a buoy or a "pole marker". If the submerged island is unusually long, at the discretion of LMRA, such hazard may be marked with more than one buoy. Boaters should stay a minimum of 100' away from such marker in all directions or be subjected to high risk.

When a boater approaches within 50' of a shoreline at high or low water levels, caution should be used. The water close to the shoreline is shallow, contains rocks, boulders and stumps. Boaters approach shore at their own risk. LMRA does not normally mark hazards at the shoreline.

V. NO WAKE AND BOATS KEEP OUT BUOYS

As noted in the "AUTHORITY" section, No Wake and Boats Keep Out buoys are authorized solely by the AMP. These are termed "Private" buoys and are usually buoys that are placed at commercial establishments, marinas or personal residence or slough. When approved, LMRA will purchase and place these buoys. At the discretion of LMRA, a charge will be made for placement of these "Private" buoys. (In 2011, the charge for a non-lighted buoy is \$200)

VI. REQUEST FOR PUBLIC'S ASSISTANCE:

Frequently, a buoy is hit by a boat or breaks away from its moored location and needs repair or replacement. LMRA requests that the public assist by contacting our office to report the missing buoy or one that has floated to a homeowner's shore. LMRA will make every effort to pick up the wayward buoy and replace it at the underwater hazard. All LMRA buoys have identifying letters and numbers that identify a specific GPS location.

Occasionally a boater will identify a hazard that has not previously been marked. A call to our office with specific locations will enable LMRA to assess the hazard and determine if proper marking is needed. The public's assistance is very important for a safe boating experience. All calls pertaining to buoys should be made to our office at 256-329-0835.