

GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF NORTH CAROLINA  
1997 SESSION

SESSION LAW 1997-257  
SENATE BILL 500

AN ACT TO ESTABLISH THE MOUNTAIN ISLAND LAKE MARINE  
COMMISSION AND TO MODIFY THE PROVISIONS FOR NO-WAKE ZONES  
ON LAKE NORMAN.

The General Assembly of North Carolina enacts:

Section 1. For purposes of this act:

- (1) "Board" means the board of commissioners of one of the three counties.
- (2) "Commission" means the Mountain Island Lake Marine Commission or its governing board, as the case may be.
- (3) "Commissioner" means a member of the governing board of the Mountain Island Lake Marine Commission.
- (4) "Three counties" means Gaston, Lincoln, and Mecklenburg Counties.
- (5) "Joint resolution" means a resolution or ordinance substantially identical in content adopted separately by the governing boards in each of the three counties.
- (6) "Mountain Island Lake" means the impounded body of water along the Catawba River in the three counties extending from the Cowans Ford Dam downstream to the Mountain Island Dam.
- (7) "Shoreline area" means, except as modified by a joint resolution, the area within the three counties lying within 1,000 feet of the full pond elevation contour on Mountain Island Lake. In addition, the shoreline area includes all islands within Mountain Island Lake and all peninsulas extending into the waters of Mountain Island Lake.
- (8) "Wildlife Commission" means the North Carolina Wildlife Resources Commission.

Section 2. The three counties may by joint resolution create the Mountain Island Lake Marine Commission. Upon its creation the Commission has the powers, duties, and responsibilities conferred upon it by joint resolution, subject to the provisions of this act. The provisions of any joint resolution may be modified, amended, or rescinded by a subsequent joint resolution. A county may unilaterally withdraw from participation as provided by any joint resolution or the provisions of this act, once the Commission has been created, and any county may unilaterally withdraw from the Commission at the end of any budget period upon 90 days prior written notice. Upon the effectuation of the withdrawal, the Commission is dissolved, and all property

of the Commission must be distributed to or divided among the three counties and any other public agency or agencies serving the Mountain Island Lake area in a manner considered equitable by the Commission by resolution adopted by it prior to dissolution.

Section 3. Upon its creation, the Commission shall have a governing board of seven. Except as otherwise provided for the initial appointees, each commissioner shall serve a three-year term. Upon creation of the Commission, the Boards of Commissioners of Gaston County and Mecklenburg County shall appoint three commissioners each, and the Board of Commissioners of Lincoln County shall appoint one commissioner. Of the initial appointees:

- (1) One commissioner appointed by Gaston County and one member appointed by Mecklenburg County shall serve one-year terms;
- (2) One commissioner appointed by Gaston County and one member appointed by Mecklenburg County shall serve two-year terms; and
- (3) One member appointed by Gaston County, one member appointed by Mecklenburg County, and the member appointed by Lincoln County shall serve three-year terms.

Any commissioner who has served two consecutive terms, including any initial term of less than three years, may not be reappointed to a third consecutive term. Such a member may, however, be appointed to serve again after the expiration of the term of the member's successor.

On the death of a commissioner, resignation, incapacity, or inability to serve, as determined by the board appointing that commissioner, or removal of the commissioner for cause, as determined by the board appointing that commissioner, the board affected may appoint another commissioner to fill the unexpired term.

Section 4. The joint resolution of the three counties shall state the terms relating to compensation to commissioners, if any, compensation of consultants and staff members employed by the Commission, and reimbursement of expenses incurred by commissioners, consultants, and employees. The Commission shall be governed by those budgetary and accounting procedures specified by joint resolution.

Section 5. Upon creation of the Commission, its governing board shall meet at a time and place agreed upon by the boards of the three counties concerned. The commissioners shall elect a chairman and officers as they choose. All officers shall serve one-year terms. The governing board shall adopt rules and regulations as it deems necessary, not inconsistent with the provisions of this act or of any joint resolution, for the proper discharge of its duties and for the governance of the Commission. In order to conduct business, a quorum must be present. The chairman may adopt those committees as authorized by those rules and regulations. The Commission shall meet regularly at times and places as specified in its rules and regulations or in any joint resolution. However, meetings of the Commission must be held in all three counties on a rotating basis so that an equal number of meetings is held in each county. Special meetings may be called as specified in the rules and regulations. The provisions of the Open Meetings Law, Article 33C of Chapter 143 of the General Statutes, shall apply.

Section 6. (a) Within the limits of funds available to it and subject to the provisions of this act and of any joint resolution, the Commission may:

- (1) Hire and fix the compensation of permanent and temporary employees and staff as it may deem necessary in carrying out its duties;
- (2) Contract with consultants for services it requires;
- (3) Contract with the State of North Carolina or the federal government, or any agency or department, or subdivision of them, for property or services as may be provided to or by these agencies and carry out the provisions of these contracts;
- (4) Contract with persons, firms, and corporations generally as to all matters over which it has a proper concern, and carry out the provisions of contracts;
- (5) Lease, rent, purchase, or otherwise obtain suitable quarters and office space for its employees and staff, and lease, rent, purchase, or otherwise obtain furniture, fixtures, vessels, vehicles, firearms, uniforms, and other supplies and equipment necessary or desirable for carrying out the duties imposed in or under the authority of this act; and
- (6) Lease, rent, purchase, construct, otherwise obtain, maintain, operate, repair, and replace, either on its own or in cooperation with other public or private agencies or individuals, any of the following: boat docks, navigation aids, waterway markers, public information signs and notices, and other items of real and personal property designed to enhance public safety in Mountain Island Lake and its shoreline area, or protection of property in the shoreline area subject however to Chapter 113 of the General Statutes and rules promulgated under that Chapter.

(b) The Commission may accept, receive, and disburse in furtherance of its functions any funds, grants, services, or property made available by the federal government or its agencies or subdivisions, by the State of North Carolina or its agencies or subdivisions, or by private and civic sources.

(c) The governing boards of the three counties may appropriate funds to the Commission out of surplus funds or funds derived from nontax sources. They may appropriate funds out of tax revenues and may also levy annually property taxes for the payments of such appropriation as a special purpose, in addition to any allowed by the Constitution, or as provided by G.S. 153A-149.

(d) The Commission shall be subject to those audit requirements as may be specified in any joint resolution.

(e) In carrying out its duties and either in addition to or in lieu of exercising various provisions of the above authorization, the Commission may, with the agreement of the governing board of the county concerned, utilize personnel and property of or assign responsibilities to any officer or employee of any of the three counties. Such contribution in kind, if substantial, may with the agreement of the other two counties be deemed to substitute in whole or in part for the financial contribution required of that county in support of the Commission.

(f) Unless otherwise specified by joint resolution, each of the three counties shall annually contribute an equal financial contribution to the Commission in an amount appropriate to support the activities of the Commission in carrying out its duties.

Section 7. (a) A copy of the joint resolution creating the Commission and of any joint resolution amending or repealing the joint resolution creating the Commission shall be filed with the Executive Director of the Wildlife Commission. When the Executive Director receives resolutions that are in substance identical from all three counties concerned, the Executive Director shall within 10 days so certify and distribute a certified single resolution text to the following:

- (1) The Secretary of State;
- (2) The clerk to the governing board of each of the three counties;
- (3) The clerks of Superior Court of Lincoln, Mecklenburg, and Gaston Counties. Upon request, the Executive Director also shall send a certified single copy of any and all applicable joint resolutions to the chairman of the Commission; and
- (4) A newspaper of general circulation in the three counties.

(b) Unless a joint resolution specifies a later date, it shall take effect when the Executive Director's certified text has been submitted to the Secretary of State for filing. Certifications of the Executive Director under the seal of the Commission as to the text or amended text of any joint resolution and of the date or dates of submission to the Secretary of State shall be admissible in evidence in any court. Certifications by any clerk of superior court of the text of any certified resolution filed with him by the Executive Director is admissible in evidence and the Executive Director's submission of the resolution for filing to the clerk shall constitute prima facie evidence that that resolution was on the date of submission also submitted for filing with the Secretary of State. Except for the certificate of a clerk as to receipt and date of submission, no evidence may be admitted in court concerning the submission of the certified text of any resolution by the Executive Director to any person other than the Secretary of State.

Section 8. (a) Except as limited in subsection (b) of this section, by restrictions in any joint resolution, and by other supervening provisions of law, the Commission may make regulations applicable to Mountain Island Lake and its shoreline area concerning all matters relating to or affecting the use of Mountain Island Lake. These regulations may not conflict with or supersede provisions of general or special acts or of regulations of State agencies promulgated under the authority of general law. No regulations adopted under this section may be adopted by the Commission except after public hearing, with publication of notice of the hearing being given in a newspaper of general circulation in the three counties at least 10 days before the hearing. In lieu of or in addition to passing regulations supplementary to State law and regulations concerning the operation of vessels on Mountain Island Lake, the Commission may, after public notice, request that the Wildlife Commission pass local regulations on this subject in accordance with the procedure established by appropriate State law.

(b) Violation of any regulation of the Commission commanding or prohibiting an act shall be a Class 3 misdemeanor.

(c) The regulations promulgated under this section take effect upon passage or upon dates as stipulated in the regulations, except that no regulation may be enforced unless adequate notice of the regulation has been posted in or on Mountain Island Lake or its shoreline area. Adequate notice as to a regulation affecting only a particular location may be by a sign, uniform waterway marker, posted notice, or other effective method of communicating the essential provisions of the regulation in the immediate vicinity of the location in question. Where a regulation applies generally as to Mountain Island Lake or its shoreline area, or both, there must be a posting of notices, signs, or markers communicating the essential provisions in at least three different places throughout the area, and it must be printed in a newspaper of general circulation in the three counties.

(d) A copy of each regulation promulgated under this section must be filed by the Commission with the following persons:

- (1) The Secretary of State;
- (2) The clerks of Superior Court of Gaston, Lincoln, and Mecklenburg Counties; and
- (3) The Executive Director of the Wildlife Commission.

(e) Any official designated in subsection (d) above may issue certified copies of regulations filed with him under the seal of his office. Those certified copies may be received in evidence in any proceeding.

(f) Publication and filing of regulations promulgated under this section as required above is for informational purposes and shall not be a prerequisite to their validity if they in fact have been duly promulgated, the public has been notified as to the substance of regulations, a copy of the text of all regulations is in fact available to any person who may be affected, and no party to any proceeding has been prejudiced by any defect that may exist with respect to publication and filing. Rules and regulations promulgated by the Commission under the provisions of other sections of this act relating to internal governance of the Commission need not be filed or published. Where posting of any sign, notice, or marker or the making of other communication is essential to the validity of a regulation duly promulgated, it shall be presumed in any proceeding that prior notice was given and maintained and the burden lies upon the party asserting to the contrary to prove lack of adequate notice of any regulation.

Section 9. (a) Where a joint resolution so provides, all law enforcement officers, or those officers as may be designated in the joint resolution, with territorial jurisdiction as to any part of Mountain Island Lake or its shoreline area shall, within the limitations of their subject matter jurisdiction, have the authority of peace officers in enforcing the laws over all of Mountain Island Lake and its shoreline area.

(b) Where a joint resolution provides it, the Commission may hire special officers to patrol and enforce the laws on Mountain Island Lake and its shoreline area. These special officers have and exercise all the powers of peace officers generally within the area in question and shall take the oaths and be subject to all provisions of law relating to law enforcement officers.

(c) Unless a joint resolution provides otherwise, all courts in the three counties within the limits of their subject matter jurisdiction shall have concurrent jurisdiction as

to all criminal offenses arising within the boundaries of Mountain Island Lake and its shoreline area.

(d) Where a law enforcement officer with jurisdiction over any part of Mountain Island Lake or its shoreline area is performing duties relating to the enforcement of the laws on Mountain Island Lake or in its shoreline area, the officer has the extraterritorial jurisdiction necessary to perform his duties. These duties include investigation of crimes an officer reasonably believes have been, or are about to be, committed within the area in question. This includes traversing by reasonable routes from one portion of that area to another although across territory not within the boundaries of Mountain Island Lake and its shoreline area; conducting prisoners in custody to court or detention facilities as authorized by law, although this may involve going outside the area in question; execution of process connected with any criminal offense alleged to have been committed within the boundaries in question, except that such process may not be executed by virtue of this provision beyond the boundaries of the three counties. This also includes continuing pursuit of and arresting any violator or suspected violator as to which grounds for arrest arose within the area in question.

(e) Where law enforcement officers are given additional territorial jurisdiction under the provisions of this section, this shall be deemed an extension of the duties of the office held, and no officer shall take any additional oath or title of office.

Section 10. (a) Section 4 of S.L. 97-129 reads as rewritten:

"Section 4. It is unlawful to operate a vessel at greater than no-wake speed within 50 yards of a boat launching area, bridge, dock, pier, marina, boat storage structure, or boat service area on the waters of Lake Norman. No-wake speed is idle speed or slow speed creating no appreciable wake.

~~With regard to marking the no-wake speed zone established in this section, each of the boards of commissioners of Catawba, Iredell, Lincoln, and Mecklenburg Counties may place and maintain navigational aids and regulatory markers of a general nature on the waters of Lake Norman within the boundaries of each respective county. Provided the counties exercise their supervisory responsibility, they may delegate the actual process of placement or maintenance of the markers to some other agency, corporation, group, or individual. With regard to marking the restricted zones, markers may be placed and maintained by the individuals using the protected areas and facilities in accordance with the Uniform Waterway Marking System and any supplementary standards for that system adopted by the Wildlife Resources Commission.~~

This section is enforceable under G.S. 75A-17 as if it were a provision of Chapter 75A of the General Statutes."

(b) Section 5 of S.L. 97-129 reads as rewritten:

~~"Section 5. Section 4 of this act is effective when it becomes law and is enforceable after markers complying with Section 7 are placed in the water. The remainder of this act is effective when it becomes law. This act is effective when it becomes law."~~

Section 11. Sections 1 through 9 of this act apply only to Gaston, Lincoln, and Mecklenburg Counties.

Section 12. This act is effective when it becomes law.

1997. In the General Assembly read three times and ratified this the 1st day of July,  
Became law on the date it was ratified.