

Outdoors: Boating safety hardly an accident

BY PHILLIP GENTRY
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Boating season kicks into high gear between the Fourth of July and Labor Day weekend, and with summer temperatures sweltering and drought conditions persistent, our area lakes see a lot of visitors.

Unfortunately, with the rise in boat traffic comes a rise in boating accidents and even fatalities. In response, the S.C. Department of Natural Resources will be conducting a series of boating safety public meetings around the state in preparation for potential regulation changes. The purpose of these meetings is to have a public dialogue to discuss how to make boating safer on South Carolina waterways.

According to Lt. Kim Leverich, the number of recreational boaters in the state has increased accordingly with the state's population, and along with that growth has been a demand from the state's boaters to make boating safer.

"The majority of our incidents and accidents involve

recreational boaters across the state, and we are looking for public input on ways that we can better educate boaters and make our waterways safer," she said.

The state of South Carolina has an abundance of water resources, with 8,000 miles of rivers, 460,000 acres of lakes and 3,000 miles of coastline. As of last year, there were approximately 485,000 registered boats in South Carolina, with thousands more registered each year. The Palmetto State consistently ranks in the top 10 of all states for registered boats.

Six meetings will be held across the state, but only one in the area, which will be held Aug. 25 at 7 p.m. at the SCDNR's Clemson office, located at 311 Natural Resources Drive.

According to Leverich, boater education among those 30 and older has fallen behind the younger generation after passage of the Safe Boater Act of 1999, which required those under the age of 16 to obtain a boater safety certificate before being able to operate a motorized watercraft with more than 15 horsepower.

Though no licensing is currently required in South Carolina, Christopher Rose, an officer with the Lake Hartwell Power Squadron, said his group will be offering an eight-hour basic boating course with a proctored exam.

The Americas Boating Course, taught both in the classroom and on the water, covers subjects such as boat handling, docking, aids to navigation, state and federal boating regulations, anchoring, trailering tips and more.

The course will be offered at the Cabela's on Woodruff Road in Greenville on Sept. 12 from 9:30 a.m. until 5 p.m. The course will be taught by the Lake Hartwell Sail and Power Squadron. The course has been approved by the National Association of State Boating Law Administrators and is recognized by many major insurance carriers and the United States Coast Guard.

For more information or to register for the event, go to UpstateBoatingCourse.org.

The Lake Hartwell Sail and Power Squadron will also be offering a free seminar — Boat-



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The rise in boating accidents across the state has prompted the SCDNR to conduct a series of boating safety public meetings to discuss the possibility of requiring boaters to be licensed in the state. Additionally, several boating education classes are currently available for those wishing to attend.

ing on Rivers, Locks and Lakes — on Aug. 8, at Cabela's from 9:30 a.m. until noon. Registration is required, as the class size is limited.

Call (864) 281-9774 or email education@lake-hartwell.org to register.

PHILLIP GENTRY is the host of "Upstate Outdoors," which airs from noon to 2 p.m. Saturdays on 106.3 WORD FM. This week's guest on the show will be local high school bass fishing anglers Derek Freeman and Trevor Callahan, winners of the 2015 FLW/TBF High School Bass Fishing World Finals. Contact Gentry at pgentry6@bellsouth.net.