

Goshen South Ramp opens to boaters; no wake zones created

Boaters on the 33,000-acre Barnett Reservoir gained a new access point March 18 when the Goshen South Boat Ramp was opened to the public. The new facility, located directly across Mississippi Highway 43 from the existing Goshen North Ramp, gives access to some of the lake's historical prime fishing areas on the northeast side of the main lake.

A joint project between the Mississippi Department of Transportation and the Pearl River Valley Water Supply District, the ramp features a pair of two-lane boat ramps, floating piers, parking and a dredged and marked channel leading to the lake. It also has a free boat-cleaning station designed to stop the transference of invasive, non-native vegetation into or out of the reservoir.

The timing of the opening couldn't be better since the ramp will provide direct access to the lake's prime crappie spawning areas on the upper end of the main lake. Beginning in late March and lasting through May, the spring crappie spawn is the reservoir's peak fishing season. It will reduce the pressure on Goshen North, the lake's most popular ramp including alleviating spillover parking on the busy Highway 43 thoroughfare.

"Goshen North has always been our busiest and most popular ramp due to its access to both the upper river and upper main lake areas," PRVWSD Director John Sigman said. "Goshen South will help alleviate some of the overcrowding that happens on weekends during the boating season, when we have seen trucks and trailers using every square inch of hard ground to park. That includes along Highway 43, which is an extremely busy thoroughfare, and created a safety issue." Boaters will have two choices of routes to the river by either idling around Sunset Marina to access the channel that parallels Highway 43, or by turning south and following an existing channel marked by single poles to reach the river channel about a mile south of Mississippi Highway 43. Any fishing tournaments based out of the new ramp will be restricted to using the south channel to intersect and access the main river channel. The PRVWWD Board instituted two new "no wake" zones related to the new ramp, including the dredged access channel at the ramp itself. The Board also added a "no wake" zone between the last two channel markers on the existing channel along the south side of Highway 43 to slow boats prior to making an obstructed-view entry into the river channel just south of the Highway 43 Bridge.

Funding for the ramp was provided in part by the Federal Highway Administration and appropriated by the Mississippi Department of Transportation and the Central Mississippi Planning and Development District, along with a PRVWSD match.