

Media Release

For Immediate Release

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Pelahatchie Bay opens to limited boating May 14

Boats restricted to south of main boat channel; one ramp open

Boating on the Pelahatchie Bay area of Barnett Reservoir will reopen on a limited basis beginning on May 14, the Pearl River Valley Water Supply District announced Thursday after a special meeting of the Board of Directors.

The Bay has been closed to public boating since mid October as PRVWSD, the Mississippi Department of Wildlife, Fisheries, and Parks, and other aquatic vegetation experts have battled an outbreak of giant salvinia, a dangerous invasive plant that was located on the north shore of the bay.

During this initial reopening, all boating will be restricted to south of the main boating channel in Pelahatchie Bay with the following exceptions:

1. Shoreline homeowners in Northshore Village and Windward Oaks subdivisions on the north shore will be allowed to use marked channels to access the open areas on the south side of Pelahatchie Bay.
2. The north shore will be open to boating beginning at the mouth of Spring Branch (Fox Bay), to include all backwaters of Pelahatchie Creek east of Spring Branch to the edge of PRVWSD property south of Mississippi Highway 25.

The Northshore Causeway Bridge will remain closed indefinitely. No travel between the main lake and Pelahatchie Bay will be allowed.

For this first phase of reopening, the only boat ramp open for access to the Bay is the Pelahatchie Shore Park ramp, where boating can be closely monitored and boats inspected prior to launch and after leaving the water. All other boat ramps on Pelahatchie Bay will remain closed.



BARNETT RESERVOIR

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Initially, the Pelahatchie Shore Park ramp will be open only between the hours of 6 a.m. and 6 p.m. and boaters using the ramp must pass boat inspections prior to launching and after trailering at the end of their outing. A cleaning station will be located at the ramp to help boaters clean their watercraft.

No launching of any kind of watercraft, including kayaks, canoes and other self- or wind-propelled boats, will be allowed at any location of Pelahatchie Bay other than Pelahatchie Shore Park, except those moored at homes. All types of craft must be inspected upon leaving the water, unless they are to be stored at a shoreline home.

Low lake levels will continue as the battle against giant salvinia continues, general manager John Sigman said. The plant has been contained to the north shore, and over 90 percent has been eradicated.

“Our aquatic vegetation experts have told us that their No. 1 recommendation is holding the lake at around 296 to keep water off the impacted areas,” he said. “At that level, none of the giant salvinia is in the water, meaning it’s drying and dying as well as being completely contained since it can’t float away or be picked up by boats.

“Basically, our experts suggested that we had two choices: raise the lake level and keep the Bay closed to boating, or keep it low and allow some limited boating access in the Bay. The Board chose to allow recreational boating.”

Sigman said that the MDWFP will continue to monitor the Bay for giant salvinia, and to apply herbicides as needed. MDWFP and other experts will provide the PRVWSD Board of Directors with periodic updates so that modifications to boating regulations can be considered.