



**From: Kelli Williams, Chief Communications Officer
City of Bartlesville**

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Lee Lake open for paddleboards, kayaks, canoes

After a painstakingly long fall and winter for those anxious to get on the water, spring has arrived and Lee Lake is ready for “no wake” vessels, city officials said this week.

“Citizens have been asking if they can put their boats, kayaks and canoes on the water, and the answer to that is ‘Yes.’ All watercraft that does not exceed five miles per hour, which is how the State of Oklahoma defines a ‘no-wake’ vessel, are permitted,” said Community Development Director Lisa Beeman.

While Lee Lake is primarily a fishing lake and was developed partially with federal funds supporting the “urban fishing” concept, other types of watercraft are allowed at the lake, Beeman said.

“Examples of other watercraft permitted at the lake are kayaks, sailboats, rowboats, paddleboards and float tubes,” she said. “Wave-runners and ski-do’s are not permitted, because those create a wake when operated.”

Boating permits are not required at either City-owned lake — Lee Lake or Hudson Lake; however, Oklahoma fishing licenses are required at all City of Bartlesville-owned reservoirs, in accordance with Oklahoma law. Safe boating practices as set forth and enforced by the Oklahoma Department of Public Safety must be adhered to as well, including mandatory use of personal flotation devices, or life jackets.

Swimming in the lake is strictly prohibited.

The newly constructed Lee Lake and surrounding park area is quickly becoming one of Bartlesville’s favorite recreational areas. The lake, located on Adams Boulevard east of

Silver Lake Road, is near Cooper Dog Park, a connecting series of Pathfinder Parkway trails, and the Julie and Charlie Daniels Soccer Fields.

The project began when Bartlesville was identified as an optimal location for an “urban fishing lake” by the Oklahoma Department of Wildlife. Property commonly known as “MJ Lee Lake” was chosen as the project site, and work ultimately began to transform the area.

“MJ Lee Lake” was originally a “borrow pit,” where dirt was stored during the widening of the adjacent Adams Boulevard. The property was deeded to the City of Bartlesville by the property’s owner, local contractor MJ Lee, under the provision that the lake retain the Lee name.

The Lee Lake project is funded with about \$230,000 in federal grant funds — administered by the Oklahoma Department of Wildlife — with the City of Bartlesville pitching in about \$750,000, obtained from the sale several years ago of BarDew Lake, a small lake located on the northern end of Virginia Avenue that was jointly owned by the cities of Bartlesville and Dewey. Bar-Dew Lake was sold to an individual following a bidding process after aging infrastructure and dam repairs became too costly to maintain.

“The City’s portion of the (Lee Lake) funding are funds from the sale of BarDew Lake,” Water Utilities Director Terry Lauritsen said. “The City Council at the time stipulated that the money from that sale be used for the development of a lake or similar project.”

The fishing lake project was identified as part of the city’s half-cent 2008 Capital Improvement Projects, and was one of the “70 percent projects” disclosed to voters during the CIP election.

“We’ve reshaped the bottom of the lake to include some areas that are shallow, some that are eight to ten feet deep and rolling terrain,” Lauritsen said. He said the terrain is designed as an optimal fish habitat.

City staff members are working with Oklahoma Department of Wildlife officials to continue stocking the lake with fish, which began last fall when the state released channel catfish and sunfish (perch) fingerlings.

“Those fingerlings won’t be big enough yet to catch, really, so we prefer that people hold off on fishing at the lake,” Parks Superintendent Bobby Robinson said. “The state is expected to release largemouth bass at the lake later this spring, but we don’t have a date on that yet.”

According to City ordinance, harvesting the bass will not be allowed. Also, catfish

harvesting is limited to six per day.

The lake is open 6 a.m. to 11 p.m. each day. Dogs outside Cooper Dog Park must be kept on-leash. Parking — as well as boat launching and landing — is allowed only in designated areas.

For more information, contact the City of Bartlesville at 918-338-4132.