Portable Fire Ring Policy

ON JANUARY 22, 2019, THE COMMISSION OF PUBLIC WORKS APPROVED A NEW SET OF POLICIES FOR THE USE OF FIRE RINGS ON SWS-OWNED PROPERTY SURROUNDING LAKE BOWEN AND LAKE BLALOCK.

We know it’s a favorite pastime for a lot of you: nights spent sitting around a fire ring/pit with family and friends. Spartanburg Water wants to make sure everyone can enjoy those memories safely and without putting nature and the reservoirs that supply our community’s drinking water at risk.

It is important to remember Spartanburg Water maintains ownership of our drinking water reservoirs, including shoreline property above the water’s edge. Protecting this land is a responsibility we take seriously because the long-term health and quality of our drinking water reservoirs are at stake.

The new fire ring/pit policies and procedures serve two main purposes: to protect you and your surroundings. In order to prevent an accidental fire and resulting property damage, fire rings/pits are not allowed in any natural vegetated buffer area. We suggest staying at least 15 feet away from tree branches and other vegetation at all times. We also require your fire ring/pit have a screen cover to keep embers contained, and we recommend you always keep a fire extinguisher or hose nearby.

Here are a few other requirements if you plan to use a portable fire ring on SWS property:

• Must be easily moveable
• Legs at least 4 inches in height so it does not touch the surface it’s sitting on
• No larger than 30 inches in diameter
• Must have annual renewable permit

It is imperative to monitor the conditions for safe burning. Always be aware of alerts, advisories, or bans on burning that may be issued by the Department of Forestry or the Fire Marshall, and stop all burning activity until such bans are lifted. During periods of drought or when officials issue High Fire Conditions alerts, permits are considered temporarily suspended. The burning of leaves, garbage, and other rubbish is not allowed on SWS property.

Personal safety is also a priority. Be sure to follow all the manufacturer’s guidelines and abide by regulations for the safe use and operations of a fire ring/pit. Spartanburg Water is not responsible or liable for any personal injury or damage to personal property resulting from the use of a portable fire ring/pit.

It’s not just important to practice safe habits while a fire ring/pit is in use, but also once the fire is out. The permitted user must properly cool the ashes and put them in a container suitable for proper disposal. Ashes are not allowed to be placed on SWS property or dumped into the water. We take great pride in our lakes and in the drinking water we provide to nearly 200,000 people, and we ask that you do your part to keep waste and pollution out.

So start enjoying those summer nights gathered around a fire with good company; but before you strike a match, remember these safety policies and our common goal to protect and preserve the beauty – and purpose – our lakes have to offer.
Park Amenities and Hours

ON THE LAKE OR ON LAND, SPARTANBURG WATER HAS PLENTY OF OPTIONS THE WHOLE FAMILY WILL ENJOY – FROM BOATING TO FISHING TO A FENCED-IN PLAYGROUND.

SWS operates two parks which are adjacent to the two Lake Warden Offices. Both parks are open daily from 6 a.m. until midnight. The first is Lake Bowen Park, which is located just off Highway 9 in Inman. There are two boat ramps and parking you can access for a day on the water. If you plan to take out a boat, jet skis, or any other type of water craft, be sure to stop at the Warden’s office and pick up a permit.

There are also a number of benches and an open green space that’s perfect for setting up games. The kids can also hit the swings or slides at Anchor Park. The play area is divided into two age-appropriate sections and is completely fenced.

Picnics or parties? We’ve got the perfect place! Grab a seat at one of the eight large, family size picnic tables under the picnic shelter, or fire up one of the two charcoal grills. For a more intimate experience, you can rent the whole picnic shelter for $50.

Visitors can also enjoy Lake Blalock Park, located at 1925 Sandy Ford Road in Chesnee. It features a boat ramp, parking, and a fishing pier. There are also three covered pavilions available to rent for $25 each.

And that’s not all… SWS also has a large, enclosed lodge-type facility that accommodates about 125 people. Pavilion #1 has a kitchen equipped with a refrigerator and microwave, restrooms, and a large meeting room with a fireplace. There are 15 round tables and 125 chairs available to use. This facility is located next to the R.B. Simms Water Treatment Facility at the end of Spartanburg Water Works Road. The full reservation fee of $500 must be paid at the time you book. The cost includes a $400 rental fee and a $100 refundable damage deposit. This gives you full use of Pavilion #1 for 14 hours (10 a.m. – 12 a.m.)

Reservations:
You can reserve any of our pavilions by calling the Spartanburg Water Administrative Office at 864-583-7361.
“Press Pause” ... while you still can!

LAKE BOWEN “PRESS PAUSE” PROGRAM: THE OFFER TO PERMIT STRUCTURES BELOW SPARTANBURG WATER’S PROPERTY LINE IS COMING TO A CLOSE.

The “Press Pause” program began October 1, 2018. Since then, we’ve been working with residents who have applied, but this 14-month window will soon end. The deadline is December 1, 2019.

The “Press Pause” program gives every adjoining property owner on Lake Bowen the chance to establish a baseline of permits for all existing improvements below the 827’ MSL Spartanburg Water property line. All you have to do is call our staff and say “Let’s Press Pause,” or sign up on our website.

Our staff will work with each property owner to review and establish a baseline of permits, licenses, and/or agreements. All existing improvements, semi-permanent or permanent structures in existence as of October 1, 2018, and in good condition, will receive an authorization from Spartanburg Water. Any improvements placed after October 1, 2018 do not qualify for the program.

During the “Pause” timeframe, adjoining property owners can request a review of Spartanburg Water files to ensure all permits, licenses, and agreements have been filed and reflect the current owner. Once you request a “Press Pause Review,” the staff will review the records with you directly. The adjoining property owner will be responsible for paying all applicable fees associated with additional permits, licenses, and agreements that are issued during this period.

The program is entirely voluntary, but is an excellent opportunity for all property owners with structures below the 827’ MSL contour to get all of these improvements approved, permitted, or licensed, and placed under your name.

As the deadline approaches, keep in mind all planned or future investments below the 827’ MSL contour will be subject to the rules and regulations in place at the time; so take action now! Sign up at www.spartanburgwater.org/pause.

EXAMPLES OF WHAT MAY BE INCLUDED ARE:

- Sea walls, in good condition
- Docks, in good condition
- Sitting area
- Planters
- Boat ramps, in good condition
- Playground equipment and structures
- Fire pit structures
- Walkways
- Occupied residences
- Decks
- Garages
- Outbuildings
- Retaining walls
- Benches
- Lawn furniture
- Picnic tables
- Flagpoles
- Beaches
- Recirculating fountains
- Fences, in good condition
The Great Blue Heron

You may have seen one of these majestic birds gliding through our southern skies or even scouring the shallow waters of our lakes for their next meal. There are six types of herons in North America, but only one calls South Carolina home - the Great Blue Heron.

It’s no wonder where the Great Blue Heron gets its name; it reflects the colors of their beautiful plumage. Their feathers are a blue-grey color with chestnut legs, a white belly, and a white cap that sits atop their black eye stripe.

Just as the Great Blue Heron is aptly named for its color, it is also appropriately named for its “great” size. These birds can grow up to four-and-a-half feet tall with a six-and-a-half foot wingspan!

If you catch them in action as they soar the skies, you’ll notice the Great Blue Heron has a distinct flight; their necks curl up in a tight “S” shape as their broad and rounded wings flap slowly and their long legs trail behind them. The Great Blue Heron usually moves very slowly, but when needed, it can snap into action quickly, with recorded flying speeds up to 30 miles per hour.

When the Great Blue Heron isn’t taking flight, you’ll likely find it wading in shallow waters. Often times, they stand motionless, waiting for prey to come to them. They have also been known to stand still and wiggle their toes under the mud to fool fish into thinking there are worms to eat. When prey comes near, the Heron uses its razor-sharp beak to strike – piercing its game and then swallowing it whole. Great Blue Heron are carnivores, with fish making up most of their diet, but they will also eat crustaceans, small reptiles and rodents, as well as insects.

Our drinking water reservoirs are the ideal habitat for the Great Blue Heron. They prefer an environment with slow-moving or standing fresh water and tall trees nearby. The Great Blue Heron is not considered a threat to humans, and they are not known to cause damage to property.

If your concern is the Heron scaring away your catch, you can attempt to frighten these birds off, but remember, all fish-eating birds are protected; it is illegal to shoot or trap these creatures without a permit. Instead, if you’re lucky enough to catch a glimpse of a Great Blue Heron, take in this magnificent sight – and take notes from these master fishermen!