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SML rabies incident confirmed

The Central Virginia Health District has received confirmation that a fox that bit a person on Stone Mountain Road in the Smith Mountain Lake area of Bedford County has tested positive for rabies.

The person who was bitten received medical treatment to prevent rabies. Treatment to prevent rabies given after exposure is successful when started soon after the exposure. The patient is expected to be fine.

This incident is a reminder that rabies is present in wild animals in the area. Rabies is caused by a virus that attacks the nervous system and is lethal if proper medical care is not given

following an exposure to the virus.

The most common source of exposure to rabies is a bite by a rabid animal. Rabies may also be transmitted if saliva from a rabid animal coming into contact with open wounds, the mouth, eyes or nose.

Everyone should take commonsense measures to protect themselves and their domestic animals from rabies. Pet owners should keep their pets up-to-date on their rabies vaccinations.

Virginia law requires that all dogs and cats four months of age and older be vaccinated for

See **RABIES**, Page 11



The Smith Mountain Eagle, owned by Womack Publishing Company, was one of the sponsors of the Smith Mountain Lake Regional Chamber of Commerce's 18th Annual SML Business Expo on May 6 at EastLake Community Church. Shown are Operations and Marketing Director Mary Beth Wellborn (left) of Womack Publishing Company and Assistant Marketing Director Rachel Nanney.

Eagle sponsors SML Chamber's Business Expo held at SMLCA

Approximately 700 Smith Mountain Lake residents and visitors engaged with local business professionals representing 85 companies at the 18th Annual SML Business Expo on May 6 at EastLake Community Church.

The event took place for the second straight year in the gymnasium of EastLake Community Church, located at 1201 Timberwood Lane in Moneta, and was

sponsored by The Smith Mountain Eagle, F&S Building Innovations and B99.9 Turner Media Group (WZBB-FM).

Erin Stanley, member relations and events director for the Smith Mountain Lake Regional Chamber of Commerce, which organizes the event, said it felt great to have the expo back to full capacity and under more familiar conditions.

"The expo is always a popular event at Smith Mountain Lake, and we are so pleased that people felt comfortable coming out and engaging with a wide range of SML area businesses," Stanley said.

Free and open to the public, the expo brought together local business owners, job seekers and

See **EXPO**, Page 12

Abandoned boats pose issue at SML

ADAM POWELL
Smith Mountain Eagle

A growing nuisance along Smith Mountain Lake and other bodies of water throughout the state of Virginia is the rising trend of abandoned boats and vessels, which are becoming not only eyesores for local residents, but also potential environmental and navigational concerns to local waterways.

According to Katie Register, executive director of Clean Virginia Waterways, there are approximately 200 abandoned boats taking up space and causing issues throughout the state of Virginia. Approximately 10 such abandoned vessels have been removed from the Smith Mountain Lake area over the past year.

"The Abandoned and Der-

elict Vessel (ADV) Workgroup has identified at least 200 boats that have been abandoned in marshes, at marinas, that have sunk in coastal waters (in the state of Virginia)," Register explained in a recent interview with the Smith Mountain Eagle.

"Not only is it currently a problem because of those 200-plus (abandoned boats), but fiberglass boats started to become popular in the 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s, and they are aging out."

"We believe that this is going to become a growing problem, as those fiberglass boats become older, and people start to realize that it is going to cost them money to dispose of the boats correctly," Register added.

"They are not just an environmental hazard to wildlife and to

See **BOATS**, Page 10

Contributed

SML Regional Chamber of Commerce Executive Director Andy Bruns (back) welcomes attendees at the SML Business Expo on May 6 at EastLake Community Church along with (from left) Chamber Ambassadors Holley Schefel and Karen Stowers and Member Relations and Events Director Erin Stanley.



Smith Mountain Lake Association

SMLA president discusses initiatives, educational outreach

ADAM POWELL
Smith Mountain Eagle

Bill Butterfield and his family first made their way to Smith Mountain Lake on a family vacation back in the summer of 2016, and it made such an impression that they soon after decided to purchase a home in the area.

Fast-forward five years, and Butterfield is now the president of the Smith Mountain Lake Association, a nonprofit organization that prides itself as the "Steward of the Lake."

"We're the oldest-running nonprofit on the lake. It's been over 50 years," said Butterfield in a recent interview with the Smith Mountain Eagle. "The Smith Mountain Lake As-

sociation's mission is to protect the water quality of the lake, and safe recreation for the lake. We're involved in all kinds of things. We do water level monitoring. We do a lot of things. It's an extremely active group with some great volunteers."

"I didn't know anything about the Smith Mountain

See **SMLA**, Page 12

Monster catfish caught



Peter Faber of Hardy caught this monster 29+ pound flathead catfish late at night April 23 fishing on Smith Mountain Lake. The flathead catfish measured 39 inches long and weighed 29 pounds 4 ounces, earning Peter a Virginia Citation Award from the Virginia Department of Wildlife Resources.

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Boats

Continued from Page 1

habitat. They are also a navigational hazard to other boaters.”

One of the issues causing the rise in abandoned boats throughout the state and region is the fact that it costs significant money to remove a boat from the water and submit it to a local landfill for final disposal. Costs can range anywhere from several hundred dollars for smaller intact watercraft to more than \$30,000 for larger sunken vessels that have to be pulled out of a waterway.

“It depends so much on the size of the boat,” Register explained. “Obviously the condition of the boat, the location of the boat (are factors in the cost of disposal). Even once a boat is out of the water, it has to be prepared for the landfill. Hazmat materials, oils, fire extinguishers, things like that have to be removed. And then you have to talk to the local landfill to find out what their requirements are. Some landfills in Virginia will take boats to a certain size. Others

require that the fiberglass hull be cut into sections, no measurement larger than 24 inches. So it’s not just removing the boat, but preparing it for disposal. And once you get it to the landfill, you pay a tipping fee — the fee for leaving it at the landfill. But we’re talking certainly several hundred (dollars), and usually more for larger boats.”

“Once a boat has sunk, or half-sunk, the costs jump to easily \$30,000,” Register continued. “Boats that have sunk and need to be re-floated and then removed, it can be that high, yes. Boats that are still floating and can be steered or towed to a takeout area — a marina that has a lift or something — those would cost a lot less.”

The current system in the state of Virginia calls for marinas and local municipalities to make an effort to locate the legal owner of an abandoned vessel before removing it. A series of abandoned boats are currently causing issues at the Bayside Marina and Yacht Club at 500 Shoreline Circle in Moneta. In today’s and last week’s edition of the Smith Mountain Eagle,

Bayside Marina and Yacht Club provided public notices in regard to three different abandoned vessels at its property: a 2003 Sea Doo, a 1980 Malibu and a 1994 Ski Nautique.

“The current process, if an abandoned boat were to show up at your business or along your shoreline, you need to find the legal owner,” Register explained. “The process is in place to make sure that the people’s personal property is respected. That people don’t just take an abandoned boat. There are laws in place to make sure that abuse doesn’t happen, but those same laws make it difficult. It’s a slower process to get rid of a boat, because you have to talk to the legal owner, and talk to them and see if they would do the right thing and remove it themselves.”

If the legal owner cannot be located, the cost of disposing of the abandoned vessel falls onto the marina, municipality, or landowner who wishes to remove the distressed watercraft.

The seeming unfairness of this system has caused many people to ponder

whether a better system can be conceived. That’s where the Clean Virginia Waterways Abandoned and Derelict Vessel Workgroup comes into play. This Workgroup has been consulting not only with Virginians affected by the current rise in abandoned boats, but also other states to see what solutions they have come up with over the years in an effort to stem the issue.

“Unfortunately, the current system is not perfect,” Register indicated. “That’s for sure. That’s why the ADV Workgroup was asking these questions over the last year and a half of meetings and interviews, and talking to other states, because this is not a problem just in Virginia. But other states have come up with some solutions.”

“Unfortunately right now, if a boat is abandoned on your property — whether it is your backyard, your shorefront or a marina — the onus does fall not on the owner who abandoned the boat, but the people who want to see that boat removed. And that’s why the ADV Workgroup was looking at alternatives to

the current system. But yeah, currently it becomes the problem of the marina.”

The ADV Workgroup developed a prevention and public outreach subcommittee, with the goal of coming up with messages for boaters, so that boaters know their legal obligations to dispose of their boats correctly when the boat ages out. Clean Virginia Waterways and other statewide conservation groups are looking to endorse specific legislation in the future that will make the process of removing abandoned boats less burdensome and costly for those stuck in this challenging situation.

“Certainly education to boaters is important,” Register explained. “They (the Workgroup) made recommendations, but they’re under review right now. I can tell you other states fund removal programs, where the money comes from all the taxpayers in a state to support removal of these boats. Some states choose to fund removal programs. Some states have vessel turn-in programs — they’re called VTIP. These vessel turn-in programs en-

courage people who have an old boat to turn them in, as long as they have clear, legal title and they own the boat. Some states take the boats, and the boat owners don’t have to pay anything. Other states have a matching program. If it’s going to cost \$2,000 to get this boat ready for the landfill, the boat owner has to pay a portion of that, but not all of it. So different states have come up with different solutions. And that’s what we plan to do here in Virginia, too. The Workgroup definitely endorses the idea that Virginia creates such a program, and starts to answer these questions.”

“I think the number one thing we heard as we interviewed marinas, landowners and small towns, they were like, ‘Hey, what are we going to do? We’ve got these abandoned boats.’ One of the things we heard often is the current system is not fair,” Register continued. “The number one thing we heard is the current system is not fair, that a marina, small business owner, or local government kind of gets stuck with this process.”

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