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Children frolic at Sandling Beach, one of four swimming beaches on Falls Lake. The study of recreation on the lake is considered crucial.

PHOTO BY BRAD ZWEERINK FOR THE NEWS & OBSERVER

Study warns against new marina

BY DEMORRIS LEE
STAFF WRITER

RALEIGH — The draft version of a long-awaited Falls Lake recreation study recommends a moratorium on marina expansion or building to decrease the amount of boat traffic on the lake.

The City of Raleigh has been awaiting the results of the study as it considers the fate of Peninsula Point, a proposed city park and marina on the lake. Federal and state officials also will use the results to complete a revision of Falls Lake's master plan.

The study was conducted during the past two years by a group of researchers from Colorado State University, which has a long history of researching recreational boating. University officials reviewed the draft version with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers last week in Wilmington.

Corps of Engineers officials would not comment on the results, saying that a public hearing on the findings will be held later this summer.

But a copy of the draft obtained by The News & Observer recommends that Falls Lake officials:

- Limit shoreline development and modifications of

shoreline vegetation to preserve natural surroundings.

- Ensure continued availability of undeveloped coves for boaters who are seeking peace and quiet or places to anchor their boat and swim.

- Prevent increased crowding and congestion in busy areas of the lake.

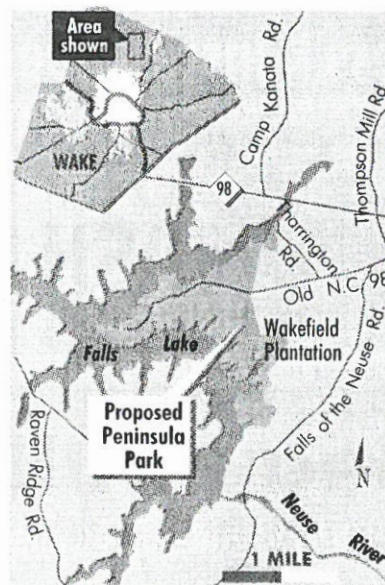
- Minimize conflicts between personal watercraft and other types of boats.

Penny Schmitt, chief of public affairs for the Wilmington District of the Corps of Engineers, said there is more work to do before the study is complete.

"The draft is really a draft, and it's by no means a final document," Schmitt said. "We will be speaking with state resources and the park agency next week to get their views and input."

That meeting will be held in Raleigh on Tuesday.

Because Falls Lake is owned by the federal government and leased by the state, the city must work with the Corps of Engineers, the state Division of Water Resources and the state Division of Parks and Recreation.



MOE / The News & Observer

SEE FALLS LAKE, PAGE 10N

Legal signs multiply, city struggles to crack down

VALERIE K. FIELDS
CORRESPONDENT

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A new club is co but keep quiet a

BY DAWN WOTAPKA
STAFF WRITER

RALEIGH — North Raleigh's former Chi-Chi's restaurant has sat empty since its fiesta ended four years ago. Now someone is prepared to give the stucco building a new life.

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Kevin Bigley, left, and his brother, Kyle, fish off the Falls Lake boat dock that is near N.C. 50. A new marina is considered a tough sell.

PHOTO BY BRAD ZWEERINK FOR THE NEWS & OBSERVER

FALLS LAKE

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1N

The study's results are crucial for an area that is quickly changing because of growth and development.

Falls Lake is a man-made lake built by the federal government in the late 1970s and early '80s. It is the main source of Raleigh's drinking water and also is to be used for flood control and recreational purposes, according to its master plan.

There are now four swimming beaches along the lake: Rolling View, Sandling, Beaverdam and Holly Point. There are 10 boating ramps, six picnic sites, three camping areas, and hunting and bank fishing access areas.

Federal planners point to the water-use study as a way of keeping true to the lake's original mission.

"The whole recreation mix has

changed since the lake was planned," say Mike Annand, a Corps of Engineers planner working on updating the master plan. "The study is critical because it will determine what recommendations are made for boating ramps and marinas, which are key ingredients to the recreational development around the lake."

For the study, Colorado State researchers interviewed 198 boaters at public launch ramps and conducted a survey of marina boaters. Of 159 questionnaires mailed, 75 were completed and returned.

While the draft does not address the City of Raleigh's park plans, it cautions against another marina. The Rolling View marina now sits on the Durham County side of the lake.

"Although there is some demand for additional marina and ramp facilities, boaters may not recognize the potential for additional boat access to further increase crowding," the

CLICK HERE

■ To read an excerpt from the Falls Lake study, see our Web site at:

NorthRaleighNews.com

draft states. "Also, demand for these new facilities might be lessened by improvements to existing facilities."

Preliminary drawings for Peninsula Point show a 400-acre park near old N.C. 98. That is near one of the areas on the lake that the study designates as being crowded.

The park would have several observation points and open nature areas, a beach and bathing area, two family picnic areas and several fields for baseball and soccer. There would be an area for a youth day camp, a trail that connects to the Neuse River and a proposed 150-slip marina.

The marina would be located near Wakefield, the 2,220-acre upscale residential community. Officials at

Wakefield initially agreed to help pay for the building of the marina, and the community's advertising materials list a marina as an amenity. One brochure mentions a "proposed Falls Lake Park with ballfields, picnic shelters, corporate retreat and full service marina."

An additional marina on the lake is likely to face major opposition from citizens who think it will jeopardize the area's drinking water supply.

"When we built the lake, I don't think anyone foresaw the type of growth we have now. It will damage the lake if we continue to put stuff around it," said Bob Mulder, a member of the lake's Watershed Protection Council and a former Raleigh Planning Board member. "As a society, we should decide what's more important, having fun or having clean water."

Raleigh City Councilman Mort Congleton, who helped enact stringent Falls Lake watershed guidelines during an earlier stint in City Hall, said a marina is a tough sell.

"I don't have a problem with the concept of a park, but I do have a problem with a marina," he said. "Unless I could get significant information that would prove me wrong, I would have to vote on the side of caution. I'm going to do what I can to protect that lake and its water supply."

Staff writer Demorris Lee can be reached

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