

Boats banned from mooring on Bayou St. John longer than 24 hours

Posted by Della Hasselle at 9:04 am

From the Mid City Messenger

<http://midcitymessenger.com/2014/09/05/boats-banned-from-mooring-on-bayou-st-john-longer-than-24-hours/#more-7010>

Sep 05 2014



Boats moored along Bayou St. John now have to be moved after 24 hours (Della Hasselle, Mid-City Messenger).

Canoes, kayaks and other boats can no longer be moored on Bayou St. John for longer than 24 hours, New Orleans City Council has ruled.

Under new law, **which passed unanimously Thursday** after being on the City Council agenda since last year, owners face impoundment, fines and even property loss for breaking the rules.

Councilwoman Susan Guidry, who wrote the ordinance, says that the law is designed to protect residents from a gamut of public health threats, including disease-bearing mosquitos, snakes and the possibility of boats becoming missiles during high-wind storms.

“This is an ordinance that’s been awhile in the making,” Guidry said, adding that she’s worked “for years” to determine proper jurisdiction over the bayou and its banks.

The Mosquito Control Board now has power to place stickers on the banned boats, City Council ruled. If the boats aren't removed after two calendar days, they may then be hauled away by the New Orleans Police Department.

The initial fine for offenders is \$150, with an additional fine of \$10 for every day the boat sits in the impounding lot. The maximum fine is \$250, but the boats can be disposed of if they sit in the lot for more than five months.

According to Guidry, the city has the power and the right to use police power to remove the boats, since they endanger neighbors who live along the waterway. However, New Orleans officials have historically had issue finding agencies to be in charge of monitoring them.

In 2009, the Orleans Levee District officials took responsibility for boats left in the water by notifying the owners via stickers and locking the boats in place if no action was taken. But it wasn't really the Orleans Levee District's jurisdiction, and the rules remained stagnant until now.

In December, officials said that finding the proper agency to deal with the boats was the biggest challenge in passing the ordinance. Michael Martin, legislative director for Councilwoman Guidry's office, [said then that the New Orleans Police Department is too busy fighting crime to deal with hauling boats out of the bayou.](#)

"The administration has told us that the NOPD doesn't have the resources to have enforcement," Martin said in December, adding that Guidry is "working to find the proper agency and proper way to enforce the impounding."

Guidry, however, has been relentless in her efforts to see the ordinance through, and monitor other land use concerns regarding Bayou St. John.

"I will continue to work on issues with regard to the bayou," she added. "It is such a unique and beautiful part of District A and of the city, and we are going to do our best to preserve it and make it as enjoyable as possible for people to use."

During Thursday's meeting, Councilwoman Stacy Head agreed the issue was important. She felt the boat owners had abused the right to use public spaces.

“I think this is a continued effort by this council and I hope by this administration to preserve and improve our public spaces for all,” Head said. “It is a shame when a few people co-op public spaces so that they can’t be used by the rest of people visiting, and living in and contributing to New Orleans.”

As of Friday morning, more than a dozen canoes and kayaks remained along Bayou St. John, either in the water or up on the banks, between New Orleans City Park and Lafitte Street. Residents who didn’t know the ordinance had passed reacted with mixed emotions, when told of the news while taking morning strolls along the waterway.

“I think it’s a great law,” said Parkview resident and adjunct professor Susan Danielson, 66. “I’ve been hoping for it and pushing for it and talking with Susan Guidry about it for a long time.”

Danielson, who has lived in the area since 1976, said the docked boats are a fairly recent phenomenon. While she wants the bayou to be used recreationally, she agrees with Head that moored boats prohibit all residents from using the area equally.

“I think it’s fabulous to use the bayou, but I want all people to have access,” she added. “Not for some people to claim bits and parts of it.”

Austin Conn, a 27-year-old student who lives in Mid-City, disagreed.

“That’s kind of lame to me. I mean, I wouldn’t put my personal equipment through the water erosion, possibility of theft, or vandalism — things like that,” Conn said. “But that’s their choice. I’m not a fan of excessive rule-booking.”