

Newspaper Article 13: How to Navigate

Our lake runs southeast to northwest, is about 40 miles long and has the shore line of the state of California. The lake's many side channels and varying depths and obstructions make it important to know how to safely navigate.

First, a little basic navigation. There are two types of lateral markers, that is, markers found on each side of the navigatable channel that define the area of safe passage. These markers can be either a buoy or a day beacon (which is either a square or triangle on a post or piling driven in the bottom or on shore). All of our lateral markets are buoys fixed to the lake bottom by a weight and tethered by a line or chain.

First we have a 'nun' marker. It is a cone-shaped buoy, always red and with even numbers. These buoys mark the right side of the channel. You may have heard the statement, "red right returning". What that means is that when you are returning from the sea, the red buoy should be on your right side. Buoy numbers are in sequence, starting with low numbers at the Thurmond Dam and ending with higher numbers at the Russell Dam.

Picture the mouth of our Savannah River. As you enter that mouth, the red buoy will be on your right and that will continue all the way up the river.

The left side of the channel is marked by a 'can' buoy that will be green and have odd numbers. So, to be safe, no matter where you are on the Savannah River, if you are cruising upstream keep the red buoys on your right and the green ones on your left.

Naturally, when headed downstream that is reversed, with the green buoy on your right and the red one on your left.

You may have noticed that there are few nun-shaped buoys on our lake. They are mostly 'can' shaped. Yet, those on your right, 'returning from the sea' are red with even numbers and those on your left are green with odd numbers.

When you get out of the main Savannah River, for instance on Little River, GA, you will find the same red on the right, green on the left as you proceed upstream. (Little River, SC has no lateral markers, as yet. The Corps is working on that.)

There are other type marker buoys (normally white cans) on our lake.

Information buoys have a painted square on them, such as Food or Fuel printed and with arrow pointing toward that destination.

Danger areas buoys will have a Diamond shape printed on them and usually also tell what it marks – like rocks, shoals and such stuff. Proceed with caution and give them a wide berth. Not all obstacles are marked, so pay attention.

Exclusion area buoys indicating off limits to all boats (or sometimes only motor boats) have a crossed diamond printed on it and sometimes tell you why they are there – like a swim area.

Controlled area buoys have a printed circle and usually tells you what not to do – like no wake or idle speed. Do as they say.

There are more and different buoys on America's waterways but the above is about all you will see on our lake.