

We all love nature, however please remember that feeding waterfowl is both unlawful and harmful



As we enjoy all the wonderful benefits of lake living in MVS including all the wildlife around us, we need to be mindful of the adverse effects of feeding waterfowl, both on us and on the waterfowl themselves.

Most of us enjoy seeing the waterfowl at Smith Mountain Lake. Canada geese, for example, are a valuable natural resource that provides recreation and enjoyment to bird watchers, hunters, and the public. However, feeding these geese can lead to an overriding concern in areas with concentrated Canada goose populations for the possibility of disease transmission to humans from direct contact with fecal material or contaminated water. In addition, human feeding of waterfowl is bad for the waterfowl themselves. For these reasons, it is unlawful to feed waterfowl (including Canada Geese). For the good of all, please help keep our wild waterfowl wild.

How might my feeding waterfowl adversely affect others, including the waterfowl themselves?

- Habitual feeding can adversely affect waterfowl populations, water quality, and other lake residents.
- Ducks and geese in the area pose potential health and pollution hazards. Canada geese contribute to fecal contamination of the environment and may potentially impact human health. Large amounts of Canada geese feces can contribute to elevated levels of fecal bacteria in natural waters. This may lead to levels of bacteria that could exceed State recreational water quality standards that are considered unsafe for recreational use.
- Habitual feeding of waterfowl is more harmful than helpful to the waterfowl, resulting in a variety of adverse effects including malnutrition, dependency, and spread of disease.
- When waterfowl populations in an area get too large and concentrated, posing significant health hazards, strong remedial efforts may be necessary including capture/euthanasia of the waterfowl.

What is the law?

The Bedford County Board of Supervisors became the first Virginia governing body to pass an ordinance making feeding the waterfowl a crime. The General Assembly approved the legislation giving localities the authority to enact such ordinances in 2004. Bedford County ordinances on feeding waterfowl are clear:

Sec. 4-111. - Feeding of migratory and non-migratory waterfowl.

- a) The feeding of migratory and nonmigratory waterfowl is hereby prohibited in Bedford County in accordance with subsection (c) of this section and subsection 4-50(c).
- b) For the purpose of this article, migratory and nonmigratory waterfowl shall be those species defined by the Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries as any and all waterfowl in the family Anatidae (ducks, geese and swans), including native, nonnative, and domestic ducks and geese, and any crossbreeds or hybrids of these birds.
- c) The prohibition of feeding of migratory and nonmigratory waterfowl shall apply within those portions of Bedford County that the board of supervisors determines are so heavily populated as to make the feeding of such waterfowl a threat to the public health or environment.

(Ord. No. O-0709-128(R), 7-13-2009)

Sec. 4-112. - Prohibited areas.

- a) Areas designated in the below subsection shall be posted with the appropriate signage designating the areas where this article is applicable.
- b) No provision of this article shall be applicable on lands within a national or state park or forest, or wildlife management area.
- c) It is the determination of the Bedford County Board of Supervisors that the following areas are so heavily populated as to make the feeding of such waterfowl a threat to the public health or environment. Specific areas include areas:
 1. Within five hundred (500) feet of the normal shoreline of Smith Mountain Lake, which is seven hundred ninety-five (795) feet National Geodetic Vertical Datum.
 2. Within five hundred (500) feet of the normal shoreline of Leesville Lake, which is six hundred sixteen (616) feet National Geodetic Vertical Datum.

(Ord. No. O-0709-128(R), 7-13-2009)

Sec. 4-113. - Penalty.

Any person violating the provisions of this article shall be subject to a civil fine not to exceed fifty dollars (\$50.00).

(Ord. No. O-0709-128(R), 7-13-2009)

What about our own MVS Restrictions?

- Article 12 a) underscores the Bedford law by stating, “No activity that disturbs the peace and quietude or constitutes a nuisance shall be conducted on any property.”
- Artificial feeding of waterfowl often creates a local nuisance by increasing the abundance of waterfowl in a relatively small area.

What are your MVS Directors doing?

- Making you aware of the law and of our restrictions.
- Publicizing your and our concern.
- Communicating with our neighboring subdivisions in the hope of fostering a mutual compliance. They are also covered by the Bedford requirement.
- Trying to solve problems in a low-key neighborly way.

How can you help?

- Do not feed waterfowl.
- If you rent your home, please make sure your renters are aware that it is unlawful to feed waterfowl.

If Your Neighbor's feeding is a problem for you:

- Talk to them about it. Explain how it affects you. They might be truly unaware of the adverse effects, both to you, the neighborhood, and the waterfowl themselves.
- If talking to your neighbor does not resolve the issue, please call the Nuisance Wildlife Hotline operated by the Department of Game and Inland Fisheries (DGIF) toll-free at 1-855-571-9003. For more information please see <https://dwr.virginia.gov/wildlife/nuisance>.
- If the DGIF determines that the problem may require a round-up / euthanasia of the waterfowl, contact a member of the HOA Board.