

From the Mid City Messenger

<http://midcitymessenger.com/2014/11/14/bayou-boat-signs-go-missing-as-irked-residents-complain/>

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A new controversy has brewed as the battle of the boats continues on Bayou St. John.



*The city has erected signs warning residents not to leave their boats on Bayou St. John for longer than 24 hours (photo by Daniel Eames).*

Last month, city officials told Mid-City Messenger that they would soon begin erecting signage along the bayou warning boat owners of a new law passed earlier this year, which allows the city to confiscate boats that have been docked on the waterway's banks for longer than 24 hours.

Residents would first be warned with a sticker placed on the boats, then would have to pay fines of up to \$250 to get their property back.

Now, the New Orleans Department of Public Works has followed through with its promise, putting up more than 20 signs along a stretch of the bayou extending from New Orleans City Park to the end of the bayou at Lafitte Street. Only, Mayor Mitch Landrieu's office recently reported that some had gone

missing from the bayou, amidst complaints by several neighbors who said the signs don't fit in with the natural landscape.

In a Nov. 11 letter addressed to "Neighborhood Leaders near Bayou St. John," a neighborhood liaison for Mayor Mitch Landrieu's asked for help from several local neighborhood organizations finding the person or persons who had been responsible for apparently removing the signs.

"As you know, in September the City Council passed an ordinance banning the docking of boats on Bayou St. John for more than 24 hours. The Department of Public Works (DPW) announced that it will install signage and begin issuing citations," said Laura A. Mellem, who works with the mayor's neighborhood engagement office. "Unfortunately, signs installed by DPW along the bayou have disappeared two weekends in a row. The Neighborhood Engagement Office asks you to please help us ensure that the signs remain in place and to report any suspicious activity to your Quality of Life Officers."

As of Friday morning, there were 22 signs along the stretch of the bayou extending through Mid-City and Faubourg St. John, and a noticeable decrease in the number of boats tied along the waterway's banks. However, some residents have made it clear that, regardless of whether or not its effective, the new signage isn't welcome.

"I consider myself somewhere in the middle on a lot of issues concerning usage of the bayou. I would say I support an ordinance to take boats when left too long. But the latest development I find QUITE disturbing," said neighbor Daniel Eames, who has a New Orleans-based electric and construction company.

In an email to Mid-City Messenger, Eames said the new additions, which extend about eight feet, are "highway-type" rather than residential-area signs "that, ironically, have an image of a motorboat." Not only are the signs out of place, he complained, but he thinks the resources used to put up that many signs could be better distributed elsewhere in the city.

"I'm just blown away by the execution of such resources for an issue that brings in very little revenue (none to date)," Eames added. "It's akin to hoarding bicycles. But our historic and pastoral landscape is totally changed."

Eames hasn't been the only neighbor to complain. After a recent article on the subject, a couple residents took to Mid-City Messenger's comment section to express distaste over the signs, calling them "unattractive."



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

While some think the signs aren't a reasonable solution, other residents had been equally upset about the boats, some of which had been abandoned and filled with stagnant water. Before the law passed, the issue of the boats had lagged in City Council for a year, as more and more residents started to complain.

Last September, Faubourg St. John Neighborhood Association Executive Board member Charlie London [brought attention to the issue in his blog](#), highlighting the threat of West Nile Virus, which is contracted by infested mosquitos.

"With reports of West Nile Virus in the news once again, I believe it is time for the City and the State to take action for the benefit of the citizens of New Orleans and begin removing boats on the bayou filled with mosquito larvae and algae," London said in that post.

"For years, the State of Louisiana and the City of New Orleans and other agencies have been tossing the ball around on who is legally responsible for Bayou St. John," he added. "I really don't

care who is legally responsible. I expect the City of New Orleans and the State of Louisiana to protect the health and safety of its citizens.”

A year later, City Council passed an ordinance deeming the city’s Mosquito Control Board responsible for putting stickers on the boats. If the boats aren’t removed after two calendar days, they may then be hauled away by the New Orleans Police Department.

City Councilwoman Susan Guidry, who introduced the ordinance, said it was 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.

Other residents, however, have said they enjoyed the boats.

“I live in bayou St. John, and I also like the boats there,” said resident Mackenzie Franco. “They add to the character of the bayou.”

Others have suggested alternative solutions, including [a city-provided boat rack](#) that would attach to the bayou’s banks, or [a registration system requiring renewal to prevent boats from being left behind](#).

“There could even be a fee attached to this, perhaps one used to fund bayou maintenance,” wrote New Orleans resident Emilie Jones in an editorial letter to NOLA.com|The Times-Picayune.

Susan Guidry’s office did not immediately respond for comment, but reports indicate The Mosquito Control Board will begin enforcing the new ordinance Dec. 8.