

Little Creek Reservoir To Open Up To Rowing Enthusiasts

W&m Rowing Club To Begin Holding Practice At Facility

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JAMES CITY — Practice for the College of William and Mary's Rowing Club began Thursday at 4:30 a.m. -- a time when most of the community was still in bed.

The moon's position is causing extremely low tides right now, forcing the college rowers into early morning practices. But pre-dawn practices will soon become a thing of the past.

The rowers will begin using Little Creek Reservoir, in the northern section of James City, and area rowing enthusiasts hope the new venue will attract high school students and adults to the sport.

Newport News Waterworks owns Little Creek, a fresh-water reservoir where a rowing demonstration to show off the sport is scheduled for 10:30 a.m. Saturday.

Rowers say Little Creek is ideal for rowing. Not only does the landlocked creek offer a steady level of water, but mature trees shelter it from the wind. Another bonus: The 1 1/4 mile straightaway there allows for competitive rowing.

And the fresh water will stop salt-water corrosion on the metal parts of the rowing boats.

"This will be by far the best place to row in Hampton Roads," said Alia Reese, the head coach for 53 club members at William and Mary.

The Friends of Williamsburg Rowing, which was first organized to support the college's rowing club, began looking for good rowing sites two years ago. The group chose Little Creek, but because the reservoir is used for drinking water, gasoline-powered boats are discouraged there. That's a problem because gasoline-powered boats carry rowing coaches and judges.

In sails another solution: The James City County Parks and Recreation Department will help buy electric boats. The environmentally friendly electric boats produce very little noise and very small wakes and can still travel at least 15 mph in order to keep up with the rowers, said George Livingston, treasurer of the friends group.

With the new electric boats and a permanent rowing site, people with the county's parks department and the Friends of Williamsburg Rowing hope others will want to start rowing.

"Rowing is truly one of the last remaining amateur sports," Livingston said. "It provides people with tremendous amount of exercise, discipline and teamwork."