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Subject: Steadily Increasing Reports of Wake Boat Caused Damage to Shorelines and Lakefront Property Suggests Need for State of Michigan Regulation – Michigan Lake Stewardship Associations
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Steadily Increasing Reports of Wake Boat Caused Damage to Shorelines and Lakefront Property Suggests Need for State of Michigan Regulation

Scott Brown February 13, 2016

By Scott Brown
ML&SA Executive Director

Michigan Lake and Stream Asso

ciations continued to receive numerous e-mails and phone calls this past summer from lakefront property owners expressing their concern regarding damage to docks, moored boats, and shorelines caused by the increasingly large number of wake boats operating on Michigan's inland waters. As wakeboarding has steadily increased in popularity over the past decade, statewide sales of recreational boats designed to create large, high energy wakes have also increased dramatically. Intense competition among wake boat manufacturers has led to the development of new technologies deployed to improve the ability of their boats to create increasingly high energy wakes. Variable, high volume ballast systems as well as specially designed hulls, propellers, and powertrains, have all led to significant improvement in the performance of wake boats in recent years. The potential for collateral damage to docks, hoists, moored boats and other shoreline equipment as well as the potential for shoreline erosion increases with wake boat displacement, engine and hull size, and speed. Ballast laden wake boats operating at even moderate speeds are capable of producing surface and near-surface wake related energy levels that substantially exceeds the energy created by even the largest of waves induced by intense summer thunderstorms and/or high winds.

If you and/or your lakefront neighbors experience personal property, and/or shoreline erosion related damage during the coming summer as a result of wake boat operation, please be sure to contact your local law enforcement agency with specific information regarding the time and date of the incident(s), a detailed description of the damage, along with photographs, and the registration number of the watercraft rendering the damage. The steadily increasing number of reports from those living on Michigan's lakefronts regarding the negative impact of wake boats on inland lake fish and wildlife habitat, native aquatic plant communities, lake water quality, and on

natural resources → not safety, which is another area of concern.

personal shoreline property, strongly suggests that the time has come for the State of Michigan to intervene by more effectively regulating the operation of wake boats on our inland lakes. In the interim, Michigan Lake and Stream Associations recommends the following operating guidelines which are intended to help minimize the ecological and environmental impacts of wake boats. Wake boat operators should be advised to:

1. Reduce their speed within 500 feet of shore;
2. Not add ballast water or other extra weight to increase the displacement of their boats;
3. Not operate wake boats near sandy areas, wetlands or lakefront residences;
4. Avoid turning wake boats in tight circles (tight circles increase wave height and frequency);
5. Avoid operating wake boats in shallow water and/ or near natural shorelines.

The wake-surfing zone should never have been designated in our part of the river, which consists of farmland in the floodplain. There is a reason there are no waterfront houses where we are. No one can build along this sensitive and flood prone area of the Willamette. This shoreline cannot withstand high energy wakes all summer. The surfing zones, if permitted, should be where there is shoreline re-inforcement, solid basalt, or lines of docks which would mitigate impact of the wakes against the shoreline.