

## SAFE QUIET LAKES

### **April 14, 2014 Stakeholder Meeting - Discussion Group Summary**

Our 3<sup>rd</sup> annual stakeholder meeting included over 60 stakeholders representing over 20 different organizations including national boating organizations, lake associations, elected government and OPP. Meeting attendees were asked to divide into discussion groups. Topics were based on the top issues of concern as determined by our 2013 survey:

1. Boats going too fast too close to shore
2. Loud boat engines
3. Large wakes
4. Unsafe and inconsiderate operation of boats

Each group was asked to brainstorm on their issue and then to propose solutions to the topic. Each group presented consensus report that focuses on solutions. The following edited notes are based on the flipcharts and presentations. Summary comments are included for each group.

#### **Group 1: BOATS GOING TOO FAST AND TOO CLOSE TO SHORE**

- Going too fast especially PWC's and large cruisers
- Going too fast between islands
- Need to distinguish between braking the law and being unsafe
- How do you define 'too fast'?
- Perceptions of distance when on the water
  - o Shores, structures, docks, etc.
- Responsibility to wildlife and property
- Boaters are unaware of the size of the wake they are creating and damages being caused
- Educating and providing information on 'issues'
  - o Neighbours and associations talking about it
- Speed may not be the issue
  - o It's the size of the wake
- Should there be more info given at the time of purchase of the watercraft?
- More education required when obtaining an operator's card
  - o Classroom has more effect on learning
- Should the responsibility of what happens behind the boat be that of a competent observer in the boat?
- Bring the classroom to the lakes

- Through marinas and local cottage associations
- Getting practical education
- Lessons on how to operate YOUR own boat
- Boat dealers should teach the owner how to operate the boat when purchasing
  - Not just a demo ride

### **Group 1: Summary Comments**

- Education of operators is needed
  - When in bays or nearshore
  - Learn to look behind at wake and effects
  - PCOC lessons and Operator lessons needed

### **Group 2: LOUD BOAT ENGINES**

- Is it an issue? - Yes, absolutely.
- Should note that a lot of work has been done by boat manufacturers to improve noise and environmental performance
- Start times for events can result in a lot of noise
  - All start at one time (e.g., bass tournaments)
  - Poker Runs (known and scheduled – some feel they are a significant issue, others don't)
- Uncertainty about regulations of mufflers on inland lakes
  - Captain's Choice – are they legal? Why are they allowed into Canada?
- Some boat owners seem to “like the negative attention” - people with noisy boats who enjoy the stir the noise creates with neighbours
- Old boats can be problems – just as loud but at a different frequency
  - Is there a double standard?
- Frequency of the engine can have an impact on the perception of noise
- Shape of propeller can also have an impact
- Modified boats
  - Make noise on purpose
- Manufacturers could market the decibel rating of their boats/engines – certification by QuietMark is an option
- Do municipalities have a role via noise by-laws?
- Have to have a dialogue with the problem person
  - Perhaps a delegation from the group could meet with those perceived to be outside the community norm
- In most cases, the OPP become the “community voice” in a noise complaint
  - Doesn't accomplish anything
  - Results in a stand-off
- Manufacturers have a responsibility
  - “this will be a good neighbour boat” – seems like a good marketing opportunity for both manufacturers and marinas who sell the boats

- Should be part of the instruction package when you buy the boat – how to operate the boat safely, quietly and responsibly
- Marina operator – example of a successful dialogue to move wakeboard school to share the noise and wakes over different areas rather than one spot all day
- Best practice of setting times of day for quiet on your part of the lake – don't start towing sports until a certain hour etc.
- Responsibility of value chain
  - Education about safe/quiet operations
    - Manufacturers
    - Marinas
    - Renters
    - Ski schools
    - Safety educators
- "Boats are where hot rods were 50 years ago"
- On water education is key
  - Current operator card testing doesn't cut it
- Post rules and tools at marinas
- Offer Boater's Code to marinas
- BoatSmart – is there a potential to work with them?
- PWC's
  - Industry has made them quieter; can they be even quieter?
  - Behaviour is a problem
  - 20 years of old noisy machines out there

### **Group 2: Summary Comments**

- Is it the boat or the operator that is the cause of "noise"?
- Poker Runs cause excessive noise
  - Running in a herd
- Are we being discriminatory against newer boats and boaters?
- PWC noise level (older models) is annoying
- Education is critical
- Quiet Boats = Marketing Advantage

### **Group 3: LARGE WAKES (AND CHOPPY WATERS)**

- Group agreed that large wakes are a concern.
  - stated a very complex issue – are different kinds of wakes
  - felt more research was needed – is it a perception or a problem – ie. Damage to other boats & shoreline
- which hull wakes are worse? –Donzi, Ditchburn, wakeboard?
- dialogue is needed between water sports users and cottagers on shorelines
- 9 km/hr close to shore – some boats throw larger wakes than others at slow speeds
- need education on wakes – who should educate?

- suggested a number of different groups
  - o marinas when buy a boat,
  - o Water boarding educators
- Water boarding educators already feel they are being targeted, but they are trying to teach safely and considerately. Wakeboard schools should be asked to move around to different places so they are not always using the same spots on the water
- group felt that we need to engage all people and all ages with multiple solutions that need to be reached
- need to educate on the legal aspects of boating and wakes – there are some people who do unsafely operate a boat
- Regulations never keep up with what is happening on the water

### **Group 3: Summary Comments**

- Are large wakes a concern?
- A matter of perception
- Research into wake actions/reactions needed
  - o Safety
  - o Damages to other boats or occupants
  - o Shoreline erosion
- Are there some locations where large wakes are more predominant?
- Boat operator education and training is needed
- Need to engage all

### **Group 4: UNSAFE AND INCONSIDERATE OPERATION OF BOATS**

- Lack of understanding of  sign
- Renters of PWCs
- Children on PWCs
- Competency

#### **Solutions**

Practical course on LOBA

- o With BoatSmart, Pride Marine Group
- o Women on Board
- o Family on Board
- TowSPORT driver program
  - o Safely tow, safely pick-up, safely monitor
- Boat delivery with 4 hour training
- Lobby to make delivery training mandatory
- Signage - universal across country
- Not against the law to ignore markers
- Educate on local knowledge markers
  - o Local issues

- Pointe au Baril cottagers mark channels
  - o Liability
- Education needs to be accessible and universal
- Get into the heart of the boat driver
- Definition of inconsiderate varies by individual
- Welcome package
- Dialogue

**Group 4: Summary Comments**

- From observation there is 'time partitioning' on many lakes
  - o Very busy at some times (e.g., on weekends) and relatively quiet at other times (e.g., after 3:00 pm on Sunday afternoon as people get ready to leave cottage)
  - o Can choose to boat in quieter times
- Advice to watch for the Muskoka Report Card from the Muskoka Watershed Council

**Concluding Commentary:**

- Safe boating requires 360 degree awareness
- Safe boating will benefit from "Social Norms Marketing"
  - o Reposition messaging to emphasize the high percentage of positive behaviour and "compliance" with norms