



Monday August 19, 2019

“Performance” can disturb your neighbours

I went to a Grand Prix auto race one time and it was amazing and exciting to hear the roar of the engines and feel the power of the machines. Then after the race I went to the beach, and I didn't want to hear the roar of engines because I wasn't at a racetrack anymore.

An overwhelming majority of people in Muskoka value quiet and the sounds of nature - over 80% across all types of boaters based on our surveys. This summer we have heard a flood of concern and dissatisfaction about noisy “performance” boats. We also hear a pretty clear distinction between the daily problems that are being reported and fast boats being demonstrated in an annual “rally” event, where there are people clearly in charge of safety and imposing behaviour norms on the drivers. Safe Quiet Lakes surveys have indicated that a majority of people on the lakes are okay with a once per year charity rally.

The complaints this summer are about boaters who routinely disturb and often intimidate their neighbours. This is a quite small group of loud and powerful boats that seem to be a lot of fun for a very few boaters, and annoying and sometimes even frightening for most of the rest of us who don't want our lakes to be someone's racetrack.

I have been asked, where does the community group Safe Quiet Lakes stand on “performance” boats and their loud noise and high speed. Our Boater's Code, which is a set of respectful boating guidelines says: *“I understand that boating is a shared experience and I will not create excessive noise or operate my boat in a manner that disrupts the peaceful enjoyment of the lake by others.”* That really doesn't seem to be too much to ask.

At Safe Quiet Lakes:

- We support fun on the water for everyone
- We embrace and promote the long tradition of mixed use on the Muskoka region lakes: swimmers, power boating, tow sports, paddling and sailing, and that means sharing the space
- We are in favour of enforcing boating and muffler laws, but also in favour of individuals self-policing to stay within the community norms

- DO think about the lake community we are all part of when you are on the water
- DON'T use a "captain's choice" system to bypass your muffler
- DON'T use an engine retrofitted after-market to make it louder
- DON'T drive fast close to the shore
- DO support the many boat and engine manufacturers who know that quiet is cool

If you are alarmed by a noisy boat that is clearly outside the norms of your lake, here are some things you can do:

- If you are the one operating a boat that is intentionally loud, please listen to your neighbours and talk to your marina or boat dealer about ways to turn down the volume
- If your neighbours have boats that seem unreasonably loud, talk to them about the impact on you, your family and the quality of the lake experience
- Report on dangerous and intrusive behaviour; the OPP want to know about illegal use of "captain's choice" mufflers, inappropriate speed close to shore and other reckless behaviour – call 1.888.310.1122
- Support public policy change – talk to Safe Quiet Lakes and your elected officials about the need for balance and respect on the lakes

There are times and places for extremely loud machines (SpaceX launches, car and boat races, and airports) but other than for a very small number of events, the Muskoka lakes just aren't that place. Let's continue the long tradition of showing respect for each other on the lakes and turn it down a bit please.

Greg Wilkinson

Chair of the Advocacy and Research Committee

Safe Quiet Lakes