



JUNE 2015 NEWSLETTER



**YOU'RE NOT
ALONE
ON THE WATER**

CHAIR'S MESSAGE

OUR MISSION AT SAFE QUIET LAKES IS TO IMPROVE SAFETY AND ENJOYMENT OF OUR TREASURED, SHARED RESOURCE.

We think the best way to make this happen is through education and communication. Let's talk about the issues, and involve all lake users in these discussions. Our fourth annual Stakeholder Meeting, held on April 13 in Port Carling, was an excellent example of this approach in action. The meeting gathered together cottage associations, marinas, industry associations like NMMA and Wakeboard and Waterski Canada, the Canada Safe Boating Council, politicians, the OPP and others. Speakers from these groups informed us about their programs and issues. We then broke into groups to talk about which kind of programs work best.

Erin Research very kindly donated their time to develop a questionnaire which the participants filled out. The analysis of these questionnaires will be on our website. A key finding is that SQL has been very successful in "increasing the discussion about respectful boating," and in "helping the various stakeholders to work together."

All our programs are based on public opinion research we conducted in 2013. That year, we surveyed over 2,300 people and found four common concerns:

- Boats going too fast, too close to shore
- Loud boat engines
- Large wakes
- Unsafe and inconsiderate boating

Last summer, with the help of our volunteers and summer intern, we met with 15 marinas; installed

WHAT CAN YOU DO? GET PEOPLE TALKING

As we enter our third summer, the focus at Safe Quiet Lakes continues to be on conversations. Getting boaters talking to each other is the most effective way of improving boater behaviour.

Face-to-face conversations are a great way to encourage neighbours to take their wakes farther off shore, or control their boating noise at certain times, or be more aware of small vessels or swimmers. The idea of 360 degree awareness – encouraging boat operators to always be aware of what's going on around them – is best reinforced with a conversation.

But those conversations aren't always easy, or even possible.

That's why SQL continues to promote use of The Boater's Code. The ten point code captures all the

30 boaters code signs at boat launches and marinas; appeared at 11 lake association AGMs; distributed 2,300 right-of-way stickers and 2,000 copies of the Boaters Code; published articles in local newspapers; and released public service announcements with 500,000 impressions.

Over the winter we were busy networking with policy makers, associations and formulating our program and strategy for this year.

THIS YEAR'S PLAN: This summer we are again fortunate to have John Joseph Mitchel as our distribution coordinator. He greatly improves the reach intensity of our education and communication programs.

This year we're launching a new communication program with resorts. In addition to distributing our boaters code, we have a shortened version that's designed to attract attention. We have grants from Seguin Township and the Township of Muskoka Lakes, which will be focused on installing large, permanent Boaters Code signs at selected boat launches. We will be working with the National Marine Manufacturers Association and the Georgian Bay Association on new policy approaches to boat engine noise for new boats. And several marinas are distributing our material in the boats they launch

All of this work is thanks to the financial support of individuals, lake associations and municipalities, and thanks to a very dedicated, hard-working board and volunteer committees. BUT we could do more with more money and more volunteers. Please make a donation through our website. Please contact me directly, if you are interested in getting involved. Share this newsletter. And let us know about upcoming events which we can participate in.

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essentials of boating behaviour, and is designed to protect boaters and their passengers and those in the water around them, as well as enhancing enjoyment of the waterway for everyone.

Thanks to the support of donors, SQL has once again hired an intern who will spend the summer visiting marinas and boat launches, and attending boat shows and other events to spread the word.

Lake associations are also welcome to share the boating code, which is available for download at www.SafeQuiet.ca. Printed cards are also available for lake associations to deliver at their AGMs or by dock-to-dock delivery – a great way to start a conversation with other people on the lake.

Lake associations looking for more information can email safequieter@gmail.com.



Summer intern John Joseph Mitchel (left) meets with boaters and marina operators throughout Muskoka.

HOW FAST ARE YOU GOING? BOAT RADAR WILL GIVE YOU THE ANSWER

We see the signs on every stretch of river, warning us to slow down. Typically they have a speed limit attached: 10 km/h in most places, 9 km/h in a few others.

The only problem is that even if you have a speedometer on your boat, it's probably not capable of registering that speed with any accuracy. So how is a boater to know whether they're speeding?

The answer may be radar.

At the SQL Stakeholder meeting in April, John Bowlby of the Canadian Safe Boating Council and a former board member of SQL unveiled a pilot project that's going to be tested in Muskoka this summer.

The plan is to set up a radar detector on busy sections of narrow waterways, such as the Indian River in Port Carling and the Muskoka River into Bracebridge, places where boaters are supposed to slow down but don't always.

"This isn't an enforcement tool," said John. "It doesn't hand out tickets, and it's not photo radar." The system, he explained, is based on the familiar highway signs, with a fixed sign showing the speed limit and a digital display showing the speed you're going.

The goal is to let boaters know just how their boat feels when it's travelling at 10 km/h, the legal speed limit within 30 metres of shore. (Some parts of Muskoka have a 9 km/h speed limit, but 10 is the norm in most of the province.)

"We need this to be non-confrontational," John said. "We need to communicate to boat operators how far they're outside the normal operating practice."

This is a pilot project, with a single sign that's moved from location to location. The sign may also be set up without a visible display from time to time, allowing it to collect data on boat speeds without offering any feedback to boaters.

Anyone interested in helping to support this project, or wanting to learn more, can contact John at 705-765-5723.

IT'S ALL ABOUT PARTNERSHIPS

SQL is committed to being a voice for all parts of the boating community, a place where every kind of boater can come together and sort out our differences.

That diversity was on display at the Safe Quiet Lakes Stakeholders Meeting, held April 13 in Port Carling. Speakers came from the OPP, the Canadian Safe Boating Council, Wakeboard Canada and the National Marine Manufacturers' Association, and all agreed that working together is the best way to combat unsafe and uncivil behaviour on the water.

"If we're going to try to do some regulatory changes, I would like us to be involved," Sarah Anghel, executive director of NMMA Canada, told the assembled crowd. The Canadian and American branches of her organization have over 1,500 members, which represent the bulk of the \$8.9 billion boating industry.

NMMA Canada has recently introduced hands-on boat training, following on a program that was pioneered by NMMA in

the U.S.. At select in-water boat shows, boaters – new and experienced – are given a chance to spend some time on the water with an experienced skipper, learning how to handle various boats safely and responsibly.

The program will be offered at the Muskoka In-Water Boat Show this year.

Similar on-water training is being promoted by Waterski and Wakeboard Canada, said the group's CEO Jasmine Northcott and Dustin Titus, head of coaching programs in Ontario. "A lot of waterski and wakeboard schools don't offer boat operator training," Dustin explained. "We're working with them to expand that offering."

Boat operator training courses specifically for those who are towing riders will be offered this summer in Muskoka, on June 15 and 30 and July 1 and 4, he said.



Greg Wilkinson, chair of the SQL Communications Committee, said this kind of partnership reflects the reality of boating – in Muskoka and beyond. "It's very easy to sit on shore and demonize a piece of equipment or an activity and that 'that's bad, and if it wasn't here things would be better,'" he said. "But that just isn't consistent with the history of boating as it has been practiced."