

September 17, 2009

To: Kootenai County Board of Commissioners
From: Robert L. Kay, Bayview boat owner
Subject: BAYVIEW/SCENIC BAY NO WAKE ZONE

I rent a slip for my houseboat at the Harborview marina in Bayview. One of the reasons I chose Bayview over other areas on the lake was because of the large no wake zone. I enjoy and love Bayview for it's wonderful serenity. Nearly all other larger bays on the lake allow jet skis, drag boats, and other fast boats to run flat-out in relatively close proximity of the shoreline. I have heard the arguments that it is inconvenient and time consuming to have to operate within the no wake zone at Scenic Bay. I don't mind it at all, since it takes me less than eight minutes to cruise through the no wake zone. That's eight minutes of safety, peace, & respect contributed to the boaters and residents of Scenic Bay and Bayview.

Primary, the no wake zone debate should focus on safety. For decades, boaters have enjoyed Scenic Bay from canoes, paddleboats, kayaks, rowboats, and other small craft without fear of being run over or swamped by the wake of another boat. Small craft often venture out in calm weather, and cannot quickly maneuver out of the way fast moving boats or hazardous waves. To say that the smaller boats have the right-of-way just isn't enough. Throw high speed small personal watercraft (jet skis) and boats towing water skiers into that mix and you've really got a safety situation. On crowded weekends and holidays, the bay becomes really congested and collisions could become more likely without the existing safety net of the no wake zone. Granted, most planning type boats leave a smaller wake at high speed, however, the driver's collision reaction time and tolerance to distractions is severely degraded by that same speed.

In my opinion, the folks that wish to go faster, water ski, and operate high speed personal water craft close to shore can do so in another part of the lake. They are free to go some place where residents and authorities have blessed those activities to be legal, safe, and acceptable. Bayview residents and other Scenic Bay users deemed those activities undesirable and disallowed them within close proximity to the city and the surrounding shoreline. That rule was implemented years ago and has served well. The no wake zone should continue to be in effect for the same reasons it was originally adopted: safety and peacefulness.

Scenic Bay is like a residential neighborhood with a nice park --- if the potential for accidents and noisy high speed traffic is likely, then traffic lights and crosswalks are installed to enhance safety and slow things down. Sure, these enhancements inconvenience local residents as well as motorists who pass through, however, we all understand the need for such inconvenience. Bayview and Scenic Bay are no different; twenty five years ago rules were put into effect to enhance safety and extend the Bay's tranquility. To rescind that convention would be a step backwards because of the potential for increased accidents and noise pollution. We should be enhancing safety and serenity, not removing them to favor the convenience of a few.

I realize that as public officials you must listen to and attempt to serve the majority. However, before the no wake zone is changed or abolished, Bayview/Scenic Bay residents and boaters deserve definitive and irrefutable proof that the overwhelming majority of the users and residents of the Bay support the alteration.

Additionally, for the County to drop the no wake zone because of the cost of repairing the buoys, would be a travesty. If it comes down to the cost of the buoys, and the County can't afford it, then creative means of repairing them or replacing them need to be investigated. Assistance from the Navy Research Facility or Coast Guard, volunteer repair work, and other innovative means need to be explored.

I ask that you approach the issue from the mutual view points of continued safety and tranquility; not expediency and convenience. Thank you for your time spent on this problem.

Bob Kay
Kent, WA