

September 18, 2009

Kootenai County Commissioners

The main argument for eliminating the no-wake zone in Scenic Bay seems to be the cost involved in maintaining the lighted buoys at the east end of the bay. Please consider the cost involved in opening the bay up to high speed boating.

Accidents in the bay would likely increase and the emergency responders would have to absorb or pass on these costs to the public.

I suspect the need for marine policing might be higher if Scenic Bay were to become a destination for thrill seekers who get a kick out of churning up the water in a confined and crowded space--something they can't get away with on the main part of the lake, though some seem to try!

Certainly the cost of maintaining docks and breakwaters will go up and though it can be argued that these are privately owned, they are in fact public marinas and the public would ultimately bear the costs passed on by the marina owners. While some of the heretofore public marinas are in the process of going private, so far half the slips must be maintained for public use by state law. Anyone who wants to witness the action of high speed boats on breakwaters, docks and pilings has only to go out to Vista Bay Marina and watch the east breakwater which is on the edge of the no-wake zone to see what major damage can be done--the four steel pilings at the north-east corner of the marina have had the welded plates broken apart from each other and when swells get going look like a bunch of drunken sailors trying to remain standing, while one entire section was blown out from the breakwater and floated away a few years ago--another section is ready to go (I know because I have rowed my dinghy out more than once to retie loose float logs.)

Now, the argument is made that boat wakes are no more than what results during storms. First, the storms always come from the same direction whereas a crowded area of high speed boats going in random directions churns up what sailors call "confused seas" and any engineer will tell you damage to a structure is greatly magnified in such conditions. Anyone who was out in the main part of the lake on 4th of July will know exactly what I mean--as well as many boater friends of mine who refuse to boat on Coeur D' Alene Lake on hot summer weekends because they feel unsafe, seasick, or trapped in an episode of "Deadliest Catch" on the Bearing Sea (they all come to Bayview to escape this.) Second, while we can do nothing about storms on the lake we certainly can mitigate the damage they cause by slowing down the boats in the bay.

I suspect the costs to the public of the current no-wake zone will be far outweighed by a dangerous and chaotic open bay if the no-wake zone is repealed. Please consider your public duty when making this important decision. Much is at stake.

Sincerely,

Brad and Linda Barron
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Bayview