

December 7, 2011

Dear Sir/Madam,

On behalf of Parks Canada, I would like to thank everyone who attended the public consultation held on November 8, 2011 in Manotick, and those who provided comments by letter, email and phone calls. Parks Canada recognizes the importance of including the opinion of the community in decisions affecting the Rideau Canal. Your input has become an integral part of the review process.

Parks Canada has always been committed to offering safe and high quality experiences to visitors to the Rideau Canal and on-going analysis is necessary to ensure this commitment is met.

Parks Canada's *Visitor Information Program Report, Boaters Survey* was the initial tool used to assess issues of wash, wake and speed along the Rideau Waterway. The 2001 *Boater Survey* indicated that 59% of the 583 boaters surveyed felt there should be a speed limit for all areas of the waterway except the lakes. According to the 2008 *Boaters Survey*, problems linked to speed and wake were increasing on the Rideau Canal. In fact, 64% of boaters surveyed agreed with creating a speed limit on the Rideau Canal other than the lakes.

Concerned by the amount of unsatisfied users, Parks Canada further investigated the problem. In 2008, through an on-line questionnaire and a direct mail survey, boaters and residents identified the area between Manotick and the 416 Bridge to be problematic. Areas of concern included public safety, property damage and environmental threats (risks to shoreline habitat and erosion).

To address risk and safety concerns expressed by Rideau Canal users, Parks Canada launched in 2009 its' Boating Safely Campaign, which incorporated various aspects of Communication, Education and Enforcement. Included in the campaign was prevention/education such as: sending letters to Parks Canada's boater database and shoreline residents, posters at all lockstations, distributing "Watch Your Wake" decals, ambassador pledges, brochures and distribution of 10,000 "Watch Your Wake" key chains and enhanced training for Parks Canada employees, particularly front-line staff in "prevention" communications. Watch Your Wake messaging was promoted through newspaper and radio ads during the navigation season.

The same year, Parks Canada commissioned Mr. James Wright, Director, Risk management Associates, to assess the public safety risks in the area north of the 416 bridge to Hogs Back. His research was presented to Parks Canada in 2010. The study can be found in its entirety on Parks Canada's website (www.pc.gc.ca/rideau).

Research was also initiated by Parks Canada to investigate natural resource concerns regarding erosion and shoreline habitat. Results of the research will be shared once its conclusions have been analyzed and further evaluated by Parks Canada employees.

After receiving Mr. Wright's risk assessment report, a working group comprised of a number of partners and stakeholders interested in public safety, and the protection and enjoyment of the Rideau Canal was established in March 2011 to help Parks Canada evaluate the consultant's recommendations and propose next steps.

The recommendations from the working group, along with data, surveys, letters and reports were further evaluated by Parks Canada. The decision to create new "no wake" zones in the summer of 2011 was based not only on the risk assessment but also took into account previous studies and discussions with key groups. The "no wake" zones were created to reduce potential risk to public safety as had been expressed by the public and supported by assessment of the area.

It is important to note that on various occasions, Parks Canada met and shared information with representatives from the Friends of the Rideau, the Ontario Marine Operators Association, the Canadian Power Squadron, Lake associations, shoreline residents, the Ottawa Police, the Ontario Provincial Police, marina operators and wakeboard and ski schools to discuss actions that could be taken to reduce safety risks in the Northern Sector of the Rideau Canal.

Following the invitation for public consultation on the “no wake” zones, either by attending a public meeting or by submitting comments directly, Parks Canada received comments from 184 households. Review of comments shows slightly less than half the people disagreed with all, or some of, the “no wake” zones. One third of the people strongly agreed with the zones (some requested additional “no wake” zones). The rest of the comments were not directly related to the installed or proposed zones.

As part of the consultation process, Parks Canada also received testimonies and photos from shoreline residents and boaters who have witnessed near misses and are concerned a serious accident is inevitable if the situation does not change. Parks Canada is aware of vessel accidents in the study area but accurate records of such incidents are not available as vessel operators are not required to report boating accidents to the authorities.

Parks Canada’s current priority in regards to “no wake” zones in the Northern Sector of the Rideau Canal is public safety. As the “no wake” zone from Black Rapids Lockstation to Mooney’s Bay (zone 5) was proposed due to shoreline erosion and that further studies are required to determine causes of erosion in this particular sector, Parks Canada will not, at this time, consult on or create this “no wake” zone.

As well, further review is required regarding the area between Ecolands Park and Long Island Lockstation (zone 6) to determine more clearly the level of public safety risk and/or natural resource protection issues before a further recommendation can be tabled for public consultation.

In the interim, Parks Canada is proposing to work with the City of Ottawa towards the installation of educational signage and possible launch management at the Ecolands boat launch.

Additional consultation opportunities will begin in January 2012 for the four new “no wake” zones that were implemented in 2011. Parks Canada will be hosting four separate meetings to discuss each of the “no wake” zones. Notifications will be sent to those who have provided their coordinates to Parks Canada. Public invitation to participate in the next steps will also be posted on the Parks Canada’s website.

Parks Canada will be consulting on the following proposed actions:

Zone 1- Reduce the new “no wake” zone at Long Island Lockstation to approximately 100 meters upstream of the locks. This still ensures the safety of those moored at the lockstation and boaters trying to enter or leave the locks.

Zone 2- “No wake” zone from Manotick Bridge to the southern tip of Long Island will remain in place, unless alternative means of managing potential risk can be agreed upon and implemented.

Zone 3- “No wake” zone from Manotick Marina downstream to Collins Point will remain in place, unless alternative means of managing potential risk can be agreed upon and implemented.

Zone 4- Maintain the “no wake” zone from the downstream end of Sanders Island (in front of Long Island Marina) to Kars Bridge.

Furthermore, the sign indicating the beginning of the “no wake” zone upstream of Kelly’s Landing will be reduced as per the consultant’s recommendation.

The Superintendent will continue to review Historic Canals Regulation Section 10 which prohibits tow sports in the navigation channel to determine if, or where, an exemption might safely be considered.

Thank you again for participating in our public consultation. Your involvement and passion for the Rideau Canal will help create a safe waterway for all to enjoy now and into the future.

If you would like to share your thoughts on zone 1 to 4 but prefer not to attend a public meeting, you are invited to send your comments to Mary Ann Stienberg, by email at maryann.stienberg@pc.gc.ca or by mail to 34 Beckwith Street South, Smiths Falls On K7A 2A8

Don Marrin
Superintendent, Rideau Canal/Eastern Ontario Field Unit
Directeur, Canal-Rideau/Unité de gestion de l'est de l'Ontario
Parks Canada / Parcs Canada
Government of Canada / Gouvernement du Canada
100 years, Come Celebrate! /100 ans, Soyez de la fête!