

Risk Safety Assessment, Northern Sector Rideau Canal

March 30, 2011

As a result of concerns expressed by shoreline residents and boaters regarding risk to public safety and shoreline erosion along the Rideau Canal, Parks Canada initiated a number of studies. These studies included a review of historical data, a survey of boaters, stakeholders and shoreline residents as well as a risk assessment conducted by James Wright a certified Risk Manager (CRM) and a Shoreline Vulnerability Study.

On March 30th a working group meeting, including 25 key stakeholders and business owners operating in the Northern sector of the canal, was convened to review the findings of the studies (primarily public safety as the environmental study has not been fully explored) and provide recommendations to help ensure visitor safety and ecological health are maintained in this sensitive area of the Rideau Canal. The working group serves as community ambassadors and helps Parks Canada have a better understanding of the situation, ensuring the most informed decisions. The group included representative(s) from Transport Canada, Ottawa Police, Canadian Power and Sail, Friends of the Rideau, Rideau Valley Conservation Authority, Wakeboard and Ski Schools, Manotick Community Organizations, Marinas, Office of the Member of Parliament for Nepean Carleton, Councilor for Ward 21 Rideau Goldburn and Parks Canada.

The general conclusion of the working group was that excessive wake, more so than speed, was indeed the problem. However non-regulatory efforts to control excessive wake have not been fully exhausted. It was felt additional speed zones that would limit/restrict all recreational tow-sports was not the preferred answer, with only a few exceptions. The need for those who participate in tow sports to attend a safety training course, was proposed as a way to address safety. The message that no wake zones and speed zones need to be more clearly defined was well articulated and that more education is necessary to ensure boaters understand the meaning of symbol signs (or preferably combine symbol with text messaging). During the meeting there was full realization that managing the identified issues will require community involvement as well as full support and participation from every group represented at the workshop. Specific recommendations arising from the workshop are being detailed for review by Don Marin, Superintendent of the Rideau Canal.

Parks Canada will analyze all recommendations and establish well defined options prior to public consultation. It is important to note that Parks Canada cannot make any regulatory changes, including addition or extension of a speed zone, without consulting Canadians and receiving approval by Transport Canada.

Once Parks Canada is ready to ask local residents for comments on proposed actions, the public will be invited to participate in the consultation process. Notification of this public consultation will be through emails, posters and public notices in the local newspapers of how they can participate and share their views with Parks Canada. At that time, we will gladly welcome all comments and suggestions.