

Workshop to Review Public Safety Zones

Introduction

Parks Canada is reviewing the impacts and consequences of wash and wake in the Rideau Canal National Historic Site within the region of Ottawa Locks to the Highway 416 bridge. A risk assessment was therefore commissioned to identify and evaluate human health and property risks that are associated with excessive speed and boat wake within this narrow corridor of the river. In addition, an ecological review of the state of shorelines along this stretch of the waterway was conducted to assess shoreline vulnerability. The purpose of this workshop is to review the findings of the studies and provide recommendations to Parks Canada to ensure the visitor safety and ecological health are maintained in this sensitive area of the Rideau Canal.

Objectives

- 1) To use the expertise of the Rideau Canal community to review and assess the proposals provided in the Risk Management Associations report (summarized in the form of maps for easy review).
- 2) To provide 'pros and cons' of each proposal from Hogs Back to the Hwy 416 bridge.
- 3) Synthesizing the information from objectives 1 and 2, provide recommendations to Parks Canada regarding future boat travel/visitor use of the river from Hogs Back to the Hwy 416 bridge.

Area Breakdown for Review and Discussion

Zone A Page 2 of Maps	Zone B Page 3 of Maps	Zone C Pages 4 & 5 of Maps
N28 (Nepean Creek) to Black Rapids	Chapman Mills to Long Island	Kellys Landing to 50m south
Ecolands Park area	Long Island to Manotick Bridge	50m past Kellys Landing to Hurst Marina
South of Ecolands to Chapman Mills	Manotick Bridge to N95	Hurst Marina to Kars
	N95 to Collins Point	Kars to 416 Bridge

Considerations

The River

- The stretch of the Rideau Canal National Historic Site from Hogs Back to the Highway 416 is a very narrow stretch of river.
- Of particular concern to Parks Canada is the narrowest stretch of the Rideau River from Hurst Marina downstream to Nepean Creek.
- The increased numbers of resident boat owners coupled with the increased variety of recreational activities in this very populated area poses a significant public safety risk.

Public Safety

- The activity of towing skiers, boarders, tubers, etc. over newly generated wake is a risk to other boaters because this activity's objective is to create wake and redirect the person being towed over the newly created wake. In order to be able to use the wake that is generated, the boaters move in unpredictable patterns (i.e. similar to a U-turn on a busy highway). Operators may not be fully focused on other boats but rather on their recreationalist. Also, people at the end of the tow rope drop (or fall) into the water, which in most cases along this stretch of the river is the navigation channel, creating a risk to themselves of coming into conflict with another travelling boat.
- Weighted hulls (i.e. using bladder bags) displace significant amounts of water creating excessively large wake which is hazardous to canoeists, swimmers, other boat users.
- Cruisers travelling at a speed in excess of 10km/h can create a wake large enough to swamp a smaller vessel or cause injury to other boaters when their pontoon or house boat is rocked violently. This effect is exacerbated when two or more cruisers are travelling in tandem.
- The hull design of a boat, regardless of the speed they are travelling, has the potential to create excessive wake as well.

Ecology

- Wake has the potential to erode shorelines which has the cascading effect of depositing soil onto the bed and impacting fish and their associated habitat(s).
- Shoreline residents are responsible for their property. Encouraging shoreline vegetation growth minimizes the effect of wake on shoreline vulnerability. Where aquatic and terrestrial vegetation has not been effective, residents can apply to Parks Canada and the Rideau Valley Conservation Authority to stabilize those areas using alternative means.

Visitor Use

- Skiing, tubing, etc. have been traditional activities in this stretch of the waterway for many years.
- The size of vessels travelling through the system is getting larger.
- There are many competing recreational activities in this narrow stretch of river.
- Additional regulated areas may affect the timing/scheduling for boaters navigating through the system

When Developing Recommendations, NOTE/REMEMBER:

- No fatal accidents resulting from user conflict in this stretch of river have been reported
- There is the potential for serious injury resulting from conflict of numerous and competing recreational activities.
- Restricting recreational activities in certain portions of the waterway may just relocate the identified risks to other sections of the Rideau Canal increasing congestion in those areas.
- Additional speed zones would increase the time it takes to transit the waterway.
 - It is unknown whether this will affect the numbers of boaters coming to the Rideau.
 - It is unknown how this will affect boating patterns.
- Enforcement may be a necessary deterrent.
 - Creating a dangerous wake H.C.R section 30 is the most difficult contravention to prove
 - Failure to obey a sign H.C.R. section 8 (such as “no wake, dead slow”) may be easier to enforce with improved signage and clear delineation but has not been tested
 - Speed restrictions and no tow zones once properly gazetted in *Vessel Operator Restriction* would be enforceable. A no tow zone cannot be specific to one recreational activity but would include all tow sports.