

MIND YOUR WAKE

By Jim Marcus

Now that the lake is ice free, it will soon be time to take to the water once again, be it to paddle, to fish, to go tubing or water skiing or to just explore around the lake. A few keeners might even be out there almost as the ice melts, first wake rights so-to-speak.

Wake, what's that? Some sort of ripple left behind at the rear of a power boat (the stern for the knowledgeable types) as you race down the lake at maximum speed.

Wake is generated by a number of factors such as boat hull shape and design and the speed of the boat moving through the water. Contributing factors are boat trim (bow up, down or level) onboard weight distribution (where you place that carton of 24...whoops, beer on the pier!) as well as lake chop. Waves may add or subtract to your wake depending on their height and your orientation to the wave as you move through the water.

But you, the power boat operator, are the one who is responsible for generating your boat's wake and you should be vigilant in monitoring your wake. Perhaps you have guests and you want to show them the lake. You load up the boat and off you go. You can't travel at trolling speed, you'll never get back before dinner; you can't travel at high speed or you will miss seeing someone's new project or some of your cottager friends who might call you in for a glass of their homemade vintage. So at half throttle, you start your tour. The stern (remember, the back) is down and the bow (the pointy end at the front) is up and a big curl develops at the rear...the wake!

Try to flatten your boat using your motor's trim or redistribute the weight (your crew) about the boat. Maybe moving heavier folks more to the bow will level your hull and significantly reduce your wake.

Another boating activity, water skiing, or the higher recreational dimension, wake boarding, is worthy of attention. The specially designed boat hull is

built to generate a huge wave for the delight of a boarder in tow. I call these “tsunami” boats. These boat operators assume a lot of responsibility to be mindful of their wake. Of course, that’s the point of these boats, to produce a very large wave.

This brings me to the point of boat wake, boating etiquette and some of the effects wake may cause. You as a power boat operator must be mindful of the wake that you produce. You must have respect for other recreational users, their property and the environment that your wake may impact. Your wake may threaten the safety of small boaters, canoes, kayaks, paddleboats, fishing boats and swimmers. Your wake may threaten the safe landing or take-off of float planes. Your wake may damage docks, boats moored to docks or property on these docks and water toys etc. Your wake may disrupt the enjoyment of other cottages by the water. Your wake may upset waterfowl especially near the shore.

Your wake may also cause detrimental environmental effects, particularly to the shoreline where your wake ultimately terminates. Your wake may cause scouring and erosion of the shoreline. Trees and shrubs may fall into the lake. Erosion of shoreline causes sedimentation of the productive littoral zone of the lake. This may, in turn, negatively impact the aquatic vegetation, cause loss of fish and invertebrate habitat and oxygen depletion and ultimately impact on the lake’s water quality. You can be held liable for damages or personal injury caused by your boat’s wake.

You should now have an awareness of your boat’s wake. You passed your course, right? You have your Pleasure Craft Operator’s Card, right? See www.tc.gc.ca for boating safety and marine regulations. See also the RLCA Safe Boating Guide which has been reproduced in this Newsletter.

Enjoy your boating season but please, please, please be mindful of your boat’s wake at all times!