

Saturday, August 15, 2020



Black Lake Property Owners' Association

2020 Lake Water Safety Survey

Short Summary of Results

Background:

After some concerns were expressed earlier in the year about water safety the BLPOA Board decided to conduct a survey of owner perceptions of water safety issues, both to inform the association in general but also perhaps to inform those filling it out.

In the end there were 101 responses to the survey, out of 178 email recipients at the time of the mail-out (remember, you must sign up for these emails here: <http://blacklakeassociation.ca/home/contact-us/manage-your-subscriptions/>).

The results are presented in a graphical format here: <https://tinyurl.com/y3f83nws>.

Watercraft Ownership:

We are largely a 'small boat lake'. The most popular watercraft were by far canoes/kayaks followed distantly by paddle boards/sail boats. The most popular power boats were small boats (such as fishing boats) followed by Medium boats. There are, of course as we can all see, some personal watercraft and larger power boats, but not that many. Reflecting the law, power boat owners have virtually all taken a (mandated) safety course.

Watercraft Use:

The boats are used frequently. Over half of respondents reporting using their boats at least once a week and few 'rarely'. Of the power boats, almost half are used for towing, such as water skiing. Of the power boats, almost half let friends or relatives use them and over half never do.

Over half of respondents perceive that boat use is higher in 2020 than in previous years with about a quarter thinking it is similar.

Boating Safety, from the Perspective of Boaters:

Most boaters boat safely. Virtually all boaters ensure there is a PFD for those on board, but less than half ask them to wear them. For those towing skiers or others, virtually all ensure there are two people onboard: one to look forward and one to look back. Virtually all boat owners warn any users about shoals (that not all are marked, especially near shore) and to be careful near shore. A modest number (under one in five) of boaters have hit a shoal in the past year, but all but one with modest damage only.

Of dock owners, sixty per cent have a dock that projects more than 15 feet from shore or a floating raft, but only a quarter have lights on them. Everyone is aware that large wakes can cause shore damage.

Boating Safety, from the Perspective of Observers:

Most of us boat safely. Around 85% of respondents have seen unsafe boating on the lake, albeit most just ‘occasionally’ and respondents attribute it to a few boaters only.

The two ‘unsafe’ activities most noticed are large wakes too close to shore (somewhat of a contrast with the high awareness of the consequences of large wakes above!) and speeding too close to shore (where there may be swimmers). These are followed by speeding too close to other boats, and boaters not wearing PFDs.

Swimming Safety:

The vast majority of swimmers swim safely. The vast majority reported swimming close to shore, followed by swimming with a buddy or an accompanying boat. That said, a third of respondents reported *seeing* swimmers too far from shore.

About one in five respondents have a life ring or something similar to throw out should a swimmer get in trouble off their property.

Areas to Which Owners Should Pay Closer Attention:

Perhaps especially remind your kids, cooped up from Covid-19 since late March, to just be careful and stay further away from shore.

Be more aware of wakes, especially at the narrows (and watch the wake: slowing down a big boat may increase the wake!).

Maybe get a light for your swimming rafts or long docks. Too many boaters are going close to shore, although hopefully not at night.

Swim close to shore. Again, too many boaters close to shore. The boat will always win if you are hit.

Perhaps get a life buoy for your property (trying to swim out to rescue a swimmer in distress is a good way to have two people drown).

Possible BLPOA Association Safety Actions:

Over forty per cent of respondents think the BLPOA should buy some smaller buoys and give them to owners with near-shore shoals by their property to deploy them and then take them in again. Another quarter think ‘maybe’. That said, only a modest number of respondents reported having such shoals and well over half already mark them, albeit not always.

Over half think that the BLPOA should buy some ‘No Wake’ signs to post by the narrows, with almost a quarter at ‘maybe’. Obviously, we would need property owner permission to do this.

These are both things your BLPOA can afford to do with the much-increased paid membership this year.

Respondent Comments:

Were quite favourable to having done the survey and are attached below, unedited. They do express concerns but recognize the limited scope for action, which lies with owners, boaters and swimmers.

Respondents' Survey Comments:

- On several occasions I have seen jet skis speeding down the lake and driving their craft, at high speed, in circles. Am always amazed that nobody is hurt.
- Thank you for this, a good reminder. The seadoo drivers are the worst, speeding and recklessly close to other boaters and shoreline. In fact we worry about swimming because of them and have not swum as much as a result, which is sad.
- Would like to see the noisy water crafts off the water by 8pm
- SeaDoos this year especially on the weekends are driving very fast and in some cases erratically. Swimmers have to be extra cautious.
- Big change this year has been the operation of Jet Skis by younger operators who are going fast and making close passes at each others wakes. I have had to tell them to get away from the shore areas at least twice, usually including some colourful language to get their attention. I have observed one of these operators fall off the PWC at speed. It would be good if the OPP did a couple of enforcement days on weekends in the summer to push up awareness of dangerous or irresponsible boating. I think we average about one every 2 years right now. Everywhere else I have boated in Ontario there have been routine checks on busy weekends.
- It would be good to post that a good boating practice for the bladder carrying wakeboard boats is to stay in the middle of the lake as much as possible. This will keep waves away from docks, hopefully other smaller boats/canoes near the shore and minimize shore erosion
- Seadoos are the biggest issue for me. Many are fine but a few speed too close to the shore.
- We know of a cottage owner from another part of the lake who comes into our bay to see other people they know at a very high speed, and when it is asked by their friends that they should slow down as they approach, it is said that their response is "F@#K them! They aren't my neighbours". So maybe we need "No Wake" signs in the bays as well.
- Most of the unsafe water activity I see is from seadoos. This includes tricks, high speeds very close to shores, standing while riding, and drinking while riding/pulling waterskiers. This happens every few days and I am very worried someone is going to be injured.
- I have seen many boaters actively policing bad behavior which is a good thing. The biggest issue I've seen is tubers/wakeboarders not staying away from skiers/kneeboarders and seafood and boats out past dark.eith no lights. A few seasons have been the bigger issue as they're not simply putting home. Most boaters I see try to get home quickly before dark and try to respect the rules which is A plus behavior.
- I see a lot of Personal water craft (Jetski) going to fast close to shore and in narrows.

- Encourage boat licensing for all who drive a boat, No wake signs in bays/@ Islands and narrows, education for those that use your watercraft while renting or visiting
- Just a few yahoo's not caring about safety or concern for others, all in part to the "ME" generation!
- The two concerns we have: using jet skis as a toy, repeatedly going around in circles too close to shore (creating their own waves for "fun")...Can be super noisy and potentially dangerous. Wake boats puking tubers close to shore, dangerous and impactful on shores and docks
- Thank you for doing this - it will hopefully lead to safer boating practices.
- Some of the questions (ie #29) will result in me making an improvement...very useful.
- Question 25, our raft has reflectors on all corners.
- i find that the seadoes speed through our area a lot
- We have noted quite a few swimmers far out in the lake with no safety floater nor accompanying boat. Most boaters (inc 'sea-doo' types) are pretty good and act safely out on Black Lake - nice to see more activity this year.
- Don't want public access for other boaters or canoers>
- I would like to see the large white buoy at the large rock by Allan Tailfer's Bay Changed to a large YELLOW
- Large boats and sea dos not respecting people on kayaks and canoes. The large wakes can easily cause them to tip over.
- Too many Yahoo's on seafood, motors too powerful for the size of the lake, no respect shown by powerboats for no motorized craft, badly tuned motors spewing fumes, we're close to Narrows and have every boat on the lake in our face, high wakes have eaten into our steep shoreline which affects water quality
- Great process...thanks
- Let's ban all boats with motors more than 10 hp
- Firstly, thank you for donating your time and for asking! As a result of this survey, we're now going to buy a lifesaving ring and place it on our waterfront in an obvious spot for others to see if needed! I don't believe the 'narrows' require a 'Slow - No Wake' zone sign due to its width. That signage requires boats to reduce speed to a level where 'forward movement and steering is just maintained' and likely won't be observed. This would also mean waterskiers couldn't move between the upper and lower water bodies which really isn't the problem. Damaging wakes are usually caused by larger boats moving slowly, intentionally creating larger wakes for surfboarding (vs smaller boats at speed, including those used for water skiing). Education is key here I believe!!! Ideally, larger wake-boarding and wake-surfing boats when under way should stay in the middle of the lake and remain at one end or the other without traveling through the narrows while 'under-way'!

- I think the two boating safety issues to address that people seem unaware of, are having no idea that boats approaching from starboard side have right of way. Got surprised by a boat approaching quickly from my port side just a bit behind me and then got the finger as I passed in front of him... sheesh. The other would be passing too close to PWCs that are twisting and turning, can result in collision. All the other issues are really courtesy issues. Like wakes and excessive noise in one location etc.
- we are in the bay on route 2. To us, the biggest problem is young men on those seadoos. They are doing donuts close to each other and the shores and swimmers. I wish they had to take a boating class/licence, and be older.
- Have seen swimming rafts more than 15 feet from shore.
- I don't believe there is a big problem. We are out most days.
- Maybe slow no wake signs around favorite nest areas of loon. Or an article on BLPOA website mentioning what large wakes can do to loons nests. As I'm sure you know, large wakes will wash away loons nests.
- We would really love to have no wake signs. I'm not sure where "the narrows" that you refer to is, but we are at what I believe is the most narrow part of the lake, at the entrance to the bay in the southeast corner of the lake (Peninsula Drive). We have been there for nearly 40 years and are seeing a real surge in dangerous boating behaviour (particularly with seadoos, but occasionally with boats too) this season.
- It should not be the associations mandate to police boating activities. Mind your own business. If I see someone boating unsafe I will let them know . Your first question should have been "Do you want the association to police boating." My answer is NO
- A lot of the questions are perceptual. Hopefully this will be used to support each other and make our lake safe rather than police each other.
- Seadoos speeding and driving erratically would be my greatest safety concern.
- I think weather (such an amazing hot summer this year) and covid has increased the traffic on the lake. It's nice to see cottagers finally get a nice hot summer to enjoy their water crafts.
- Thank you for all those involved in taking the time to put this survey together, your efforts are appreciated.
- Very few boats at my end of the lake - they usually turn around before they get to me
- The amount of jet ski this year has increased I find them annoying
- The Black Lake Properties association cannot possibly mark every obstacle ob the lake. If a boater hits a rock, it is their responsibility. As I checked off earlier, I did no in fact clip a rock two years ago with my boat...MY BAD..MY RESPONSIBILITY. ...I new the rock was there somewhere but was trying to tow out a boat that had an engine would not start.

- A few boaters seem oblivious about the wake they create, or the speed. My friend and I were in kayaks in West Bay, a young boater was paying no attention and nearly run us over. Inattention to others in or on the water is potentially catastrophic.
- Thank you for this survey! Thanks for the great job putting out the buoys this year. Makes it so much safer travelling the lake.
- Thank you sooo much. Very good survey
- I have rarely witnessed unsafe boating on the lake. I would not be in favour of restrictive signage on the lake as I believe it would detract from the natural beauty of the lake. I feel that most boaters are responsible and adhere to safe boating guidelines. I feel these measures would paint all boaters with a too wide paintbrush for the sake of a possible few. I love this lake and would hate to see it become filled with unnecessary and negative messaging.
- Some of the more dangerous driving I've seen is from seadoos
- Love this lake very much! Thanks for all that you are doing to keep us safe!