

Please Don't Wake Me!



Over the last few years, we have discussed many best practices that pertain to boating, swimmer safety and shoreline preservation. Many of these were summarized in “Share the Lake” article that acknowledged our lake is a wonderful resource that everyone can enjoy, if we all are aware of our individual impacts and share the lake responsibly.

The “No Wake” laws were established under New York State Navigation Laws several decades ago, and are still relevant. Operating any boat on Conesus Lake within 200 ft of any shoreline, dock, float or anchored boat at any speed that creates a wake (specifically defined as exceeding 5mph) is illegal and creates several issues that can result in harm to swimmers, kayakers / paddleboarders, shoreline and property. Not only can wakes overwhelm a swimmer and capsize a boat or board, but they can create significant damage to breakwalls, create shoreline erosion, increase weed chop and generate a good deal of water clarity issues due to the wave interaction.

The last several years has seen the rise of new water sports – wakeboarding and wakesurfing and a new class of boat – the wakeboard boat designed to provide maximum enjoyment for this sport. It is the hope of this article that these new boats and boaters will also be able to responsibly “share the lake” by remaining aware of the potential impact and ways to minimize that impact.

First some observations regarding wakeboard boats and resultant wakes might be relevant:

- A major goal of the design of a wakeboard boat is to maximize the size and control the shape of its wake. In order to achieve this, the wakeboard boat uses three primary techniques:
 1. Displacement – A typical 22’ deckboat weighs approximately 3300lbs, a similar size wakeboard boat can be rated for up to 5500 lbs. Wakeboard boats have the additional option of ballasting, using either lead or water to increase their weight and displacement by as much as 4200 lbs. The deeper a hull is in the water, the more it displaces and the bigger the wake it can potentially create. Almost a 3x difference in displacement can be created by these factors.
 2. Wake shaping devices – Most new wakeboard boats are now equipped with devices on the stern and/or stern quarters to shape and exaggerate the displaced wake even more.
 3. Speed – A boat “on plane” generates approximately ½ the wake size that the same boat does “in transition” (between “no wake” and getting up to plane). A wakeboard boat

operates primarily at the slower transition speed especially when wake surfing. Again, increasing the resultant wake.

- All told, a wakeboard boat can create a wake that is easily 2x-3x the size of other similarly sized boats and potentially much bigger than that.

So why should we care? Physical laws dictate that the energy carried by a 10" wake is 4 times that of a 5" wake, and a 25" wake carries 25 times the energy!! Although the potential for destruction may not be exactly proportional to this energy carried, it certainly indicates how much more damage could be associated with these bigger wakes.

So how can wakeboard boats responsibly "share the lake"? We will pass on some suggestions that some of our resident wakeboard boat owners already practice:

- Be aware of the size of your wake and its potential impact. Conesus Lake is almost a mile wide in many places, with a lot of lake to enjoy. Enjoy your sport and have fun, but steer well clear of the shoreline and allow your wake to attenuate well before it affects the safety of our swimmers or causes undue impacts on the shoreline.
- Be aware of "floating boats" – although State Law only protects anchored boats (pass no closer than 100 ft), many boaters enjoy going for a float on the lake to relax. Passing a floating boat within several hundred feet with your wake creates a less than pleasant experience. Please be considerate.
- Many wakesurfers create a wake with one side larger than the other. Consider directing this enhanced side of the wake away from the nearest shore.

Again, like all good and safe boating practices, it comes down to awareness and consideration. Hopefully with these ideas in mind, wakeboard boaters will continue to "share the lake" with all our other swimmers, boaters and shoreline owners that enjoy this beautiful treasure.

"All of Us...Doing our Part!"
Scott Proctor / Karl Hanafin
Members, Water Quality Committee