

Property Owner's Perspective of Wake Boats on IP Reservoir

Bryan Beitler

- Property Owners in Rancho McCrae since 1985
- Two lots on IP Reservoir, on the inlet arm where Henry's Fork enters the lake at McCrea's Bridge
- I worked for the USFS out of Island Park as a summer employee in the 70's.
- The Rancho McCrae water-front includes many docks, active boaters and water sports activities, we have our own community launch ramp.
- We own two boats, used mostly for fishing
- I am a semi retired Refrigeration Engineer

A busy day on the lake in the 90's used to be about finding the best place to anchor in Trude Bay to catch some nice fish! Today, things are a little different!



Island Park Reservoir: Boating Safety, Observations & Regulations

- IP Reservoir has always been a boating-oriented body of water. It has transitioned from a water skiing/fishing lake to predominately a water sports lake, both motorized and non-motorized
- Wake boats are relatively new to IP Res., as are paddle boards, sea kayaks, fishing pontoons/float tubes and some high-speed versions of jet skis.
- Damage has occurred to many existing wood docks from waves, requiring expensive replacement.
- Regulations state that there is to be a 100' no wake zone from any dock, structure, boats and persons in the water.
- Wake boats are legal, however there have been many times where operators don't seem to realize the disruption associated with wave action.
- Invasive species pressure is now close by (Twin Falls area). This relates to bladder sanitizing.
- Some lakefront homeowners have taken it upon themselves to confront those that abuse the regulations, which has caused some tenuous situations.

There is a high level of concern within the community that boating regulations are not current with the advent of wave generating/enhancing watercraft in the narrow portions of Island Park Reservoir...

More Details...

- In 2019, our HOA invited Deputy Olsen to speak at our annual meeting on boating safety.
 - Boater safety information was distributed
 - They have 3 Deputies that cover 5 lakes
 - They are working hard to “push” wake boats out into the bigger part of the lake
- Properties are being rented to short-term renters, who may not be familiar with the regs
- Our section of the lake only has docks on one side. Other locations (Lakeside Lodge and Cowan, Bill’s island area) have docks located on both sides of the lake.
- Many docks extend 100’ into the lake. Our section of the lake varies in distance across, some of the narrower areas near Mill Creek and at Rancho McCrae might only be 250’ across.
- With a 100’ dock and a 100’ no wake zone, there are some locations where it would be impossible to run a wake boat and not follow the regulations (at full pool). Lower water levels make it more difficult to comply with the regulations.
- Many times there are wake boats operating in both directions, some have jet skis behind them jumping the waves. A person on a kayak or paddle board doesn’t stand a chance.

We fear that someday, someone will be hurt as a result of increased wake and wave action on the lake. It could be a son, daughter, grandchild or parent. The last thing any of us wants is an injury that could be prevented.

Bank Erosion, it seems to be a real issue





Beitler Dock = 63'

100' no wake zone
from end of dock

8:50 PM Tue Sep 26

53°
AQI 43

Search Maps

Wave Generation from a wake boat, Rancho McCrae

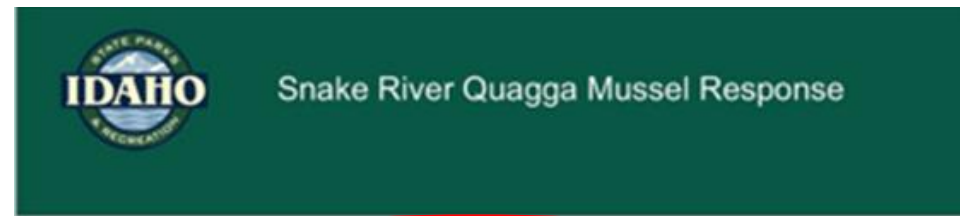


What did we see?

- Wave boat is in the middle of the lake, probably 100' from the end of our dock, 160+ feet from shore.
- Wave action to the docks and a docked boat is significant, exceeding the regulations.
- If a person was standing on the dock, it would be hard to stay on your feet.
- Our boat has to be docked with bow facing outwards, avoiding waves from coming over the stern (we have seen this with neighbors).
- Waves breaking at the shoreline do cause “silting” in the water, we have seen it extend 10+ feet into the lake.
- The paddle boarder on the opposite side of the lake had to sit down on their paddle board...
- The wave boat was operating at a very low speed and safely.
- There was obviously a wake that was generated that hit the docks, paddle boarder and a boat, contrary to Idaho boating regulations.
- This video is from the middle of the day. Wave boats have been seen doing similar runs at 9:45 PM...

Invasive Species are now in the Snake River

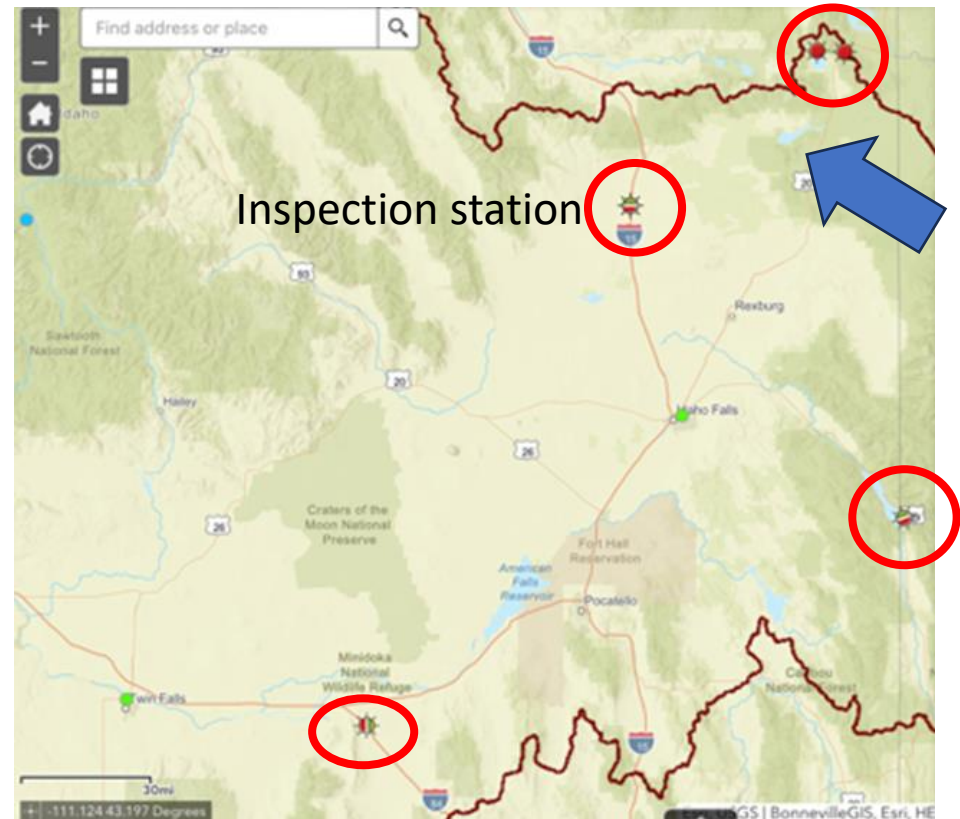
- A 9-26 email informed us that certain areas in the Snake River near Twin Falls are now closed to any public access.
- It doesn't appear that there are any check stations between Twin Falls and Island Park
- Chemical treatment of the effected areas started last week, copper based Natrix will be used, it will kill fish in the area.
- Montana Bill HB-608 was passed requiring a different regional cleaning process for wake boats
- Is our process in Idaho 100% effective in cleaning wake boat bladders? Do we have proof?
- The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's "Clean, Drain and Dry" process is impossible with a bladder. They can't be fully drained and dried...



Water Access Closure

For the public's safety, the safety of staff and to minimize potential movement of quagga mussels, the Idaho State Department of Agriculture (ISDA) has closed off public access to the Snake River between Niagara Springs and Twin Falls.

Over the weekend there were numerous challenges with members of the public going against the water access closure. People on foot, boats, paddleboards, and kayaks entered the closed area. Entering the area creates a major safety risk to the public and to ISDA staff. ISDA is coordinating with local authorities to enforce the ISDA closure along the Snake River.



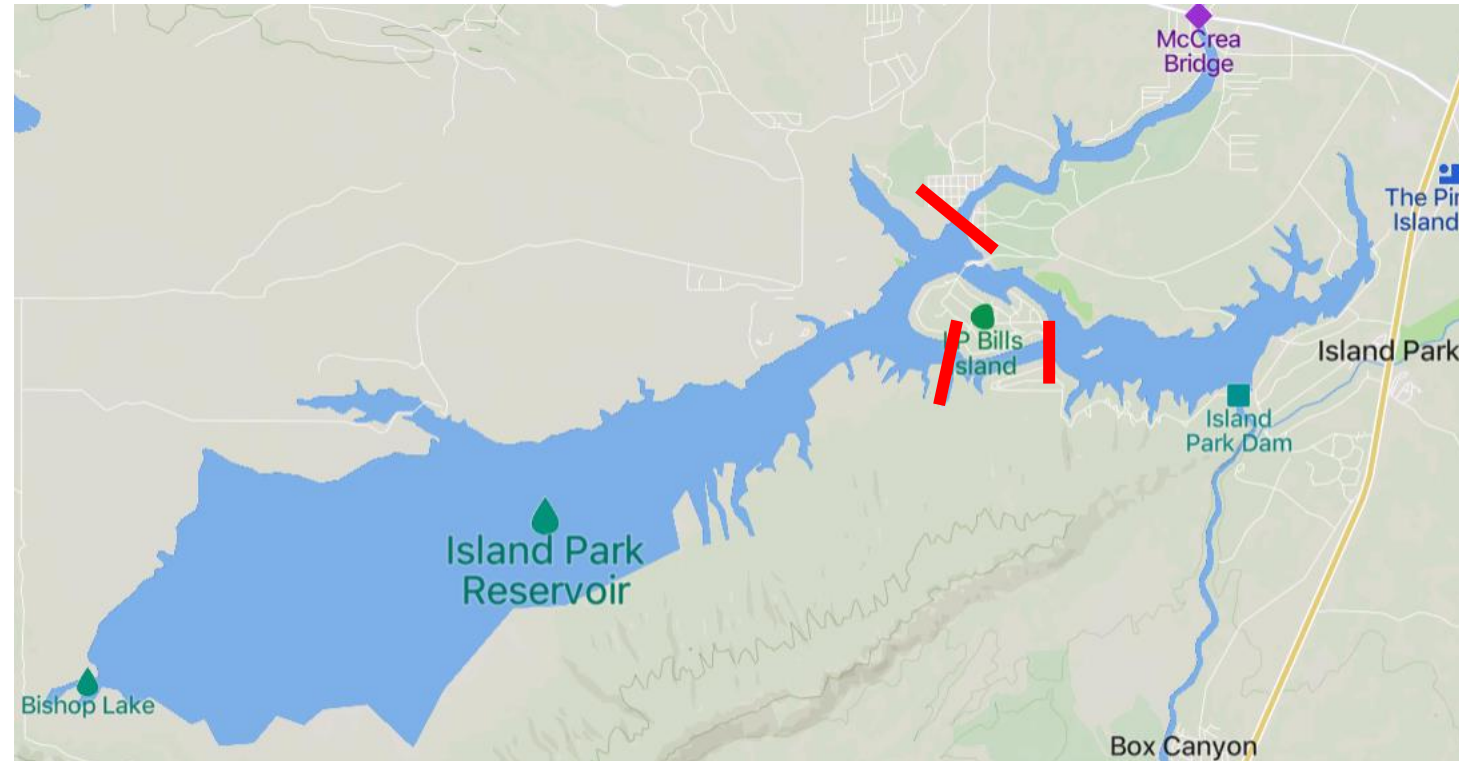
What Have we Done to Promote Awareness?

- Letters were written to the 3 Fremont County Commissioners in 2019, we have 3 new Commissioners today. One did call me, an invite was extended for a visit...No apparent action with respect to regulations resulted
- Letters were written to 6 IDPR personnel, from Director to Boating Program management. 5 of 6 are now new.
- One returned letter from IDPR Boating Program Manager indicating resources were being allocated to boating education. Direct mailing was done to 10,000+ Idaho boat owners who were identified as wake boat owners. Digital marketing, Television and radio adds were also initiated. This is really good! Has it continued? Was it effective?
- A referral was received to contact Idaho Dept. of Agriculture regarding Invasive species, which I had an email dialogue with.
- Other Idaho Counties have changed boating regulations resulting in increased no wake zones.

At the end of the day, if everyone practiced safe boating and followed all of the regulations, in many areas of the lake, we would still have a wake problem. We must examine solutions that are good for the community!

Possible Solutions:

- What if we keep wave generating watercraft from the narrow portions of the lake? See Red lines to the right
 - Upriver from Lakeside Lodge
 - Narrow section at Bills Island
 - Other areas?
- If launching within a restricted area, you must not fill ballast tanks until you are out of the restricted area.
- This moves the big waves into areas of the lake where the waves will have more room to dissipate.
- It would make enforcement of the current regulations much cleaner.
- “no wake zone” regulation distances could be changed, however there just isn’t enough space in the narrower parts of the lake for this to make a difference.



Conclusions:

- I am pro boating, make no mistake about it.
- It isn't reasonable for a select few that choose to operate wake boats to dictate what others can do on the lake safely. You are at risk in non-motorized watercraft (even smaller motorized boats) if in the vicinity of a wake boat.
- Wake boats are here to stay, we must seek a suitable compromise that all can live with and still enjoy our recreational time.
- To not make change means that someone someday will get hurt, none of us want that.
- The Fremont County Commissioners are the only body that can make a change in boating regulations. I am not sure about localized restrictions.
- Other Counties have changed their regulations.
- If/when change is made, we must empower the local Marine Sheriff's team to be able to provide effective enforcement. More manpower may be a good place to start.

Thank you for
Listening!

