

Oregon State Marine Board

Departments

Search

About Us

Contact Us

Boating Access

Boating Obstructions

Boating Safety

Public Meetings

News Releases

Marine Events Calendar

Public Records Request

Public Awareness
Campaigns

Publications
Library/Forms

Performance Measures

Contractor Bids

How to Do Business with
the Agency

Rulemaking

Administrative Rules

Oregon Revised Statutes

OSMB Home Page

Wakeboard Boat Operation



Users All Share the Water

Wakeboard Boats Require Extra Care

Wakeboard boats are generating more complaints than any other type of boat in Oregon, chasing away fishing boats and enraging shoreside residents. Wakeboat operators must take steps to resolve complaints or face restrictive regulations.

1. Operate your wakeboat away from other water recreationists. Recognize that the larger wake can be dangerous to swimmers, canoeists and boat anglers. Avoid operating in narrow rivers or canyons where steep banks reflect the wake creating more turbulence. **The operator of the boat is responsible for damage caused by the wake**, including damage to boats, docks or injury to persons.
2. Add-on ballast tanks may destabilize your boat. Depending on your boat's design, on-board water bags can shift the boat's center of gravity and, in some circumstances, increase the likelihood that the boat will capsize or pitch sharply during turns, especially if bags are not securely fastened down and shift during maneuvers. Add-on ballast bags also take up floor space, increasing the tripping hazard on boats.
3. Add-on ballast tanks may make your boat illegal to operate. If your 18-foot ski boat has an 8-person/1200 pound capacity and you load in 750 pounds of ballast bags, you now have room for 450 pounds of people and gear. Since boarding and skiing is a three-person job (skier, operator and spotter) that load limit will likely be exceeded.

The Marine Board has been asked by the public to consider regulatory restraints on operation of these types of craft. New regulations will not be necessary if people learn to operate these craft safely, responsibly and avoid conflict with other users.

Please, be especially considerate of others when operating these types of watercraft.

Boat Wakes

Boat Wakes Can Be Fun, BUT...

one of the challenging aspects of managing boating in an urban area. The problem seems to be growing now for two reasons – there are a larger number of large, wake-producing boats, and there are more people living along the shoreline who are literally impacted by these wakes. The Oregon State Marine Board sees it as a mutual problem with a mutual solution.



Don't Wakeboard in Front of Peoples' Homes or Docks!

In April of 2005, the Marine Board accepted a petition seeking to create a "low wake zone" on a portion of the lower Willamette River. This controversial idea was not without merit, but based on several issues, the Board chose to not implement the proposal. Instead, they directed staff to form a working group to look more deeply at the wake issue and address using current and available tools. Those tools would be enforcement and education.

The first step was reviewing if law enforcement in this area was adequately applied. We decided it was not. If a skipper operates his boat in a way that damages or is likely to damage private property or cause injury, ORS 830.305 clearly states it as a citable offense. At \$720, it's a significant fine, too. We will be looking for violations this boating season, so be warned. If you're operating your boat in a developed area, near other small boats, paddlers, or swimmers and you create a wake that causes damage or injury, you could be cited.

We formed a working group to look at the education part of this solution. Made up of landowners, boaters and law enforcement, we wanted to make sure that both sides of the controversy get an important message.

For boaters, the message is "Play Away." If you are operating a wakeboard boat or yacht and you are creating large wakes, do so in an area where there are not docks, moored boats, other boats or paddle craft. Be cautious. When in crowded areas, operate your boat in a way that minimizes your wake. [Click here](#) to see our wake boarder direct mailer.

For landowners, recognize that boaters have a legitimate claim to the river. It's public property. If you're going to build a dock, make sure you have the proper permits and that you build it strong to withstand the weather, the tides, the seasonal currents and the boats that have used the river for so long. If you see someone committing an egregious violation – clearly being careless, call your local marine officers and report it.

We have a number of projects we're working on – signage at boat ramps, direct mail to landowners and wakeboarders, handouts and other information. We hope that education and common sense will prevail and prevent the need for restrictive regulations. Yachts can also create wakes. [Click here](#) to see our yachting direct mailer.

The number of boats 16-26 feet has grown in Oregon from 91,000 in 2000, to 97,000 in 2005. The number of boats under 16 feet has declined from 98,000 in 2000 to 84,000 in 2005. These larger boats have a larger footprint in the water and are more noticeable.

2007 Wake Outreach Activities

- Direct mail flyer to 7,000 wakeboarders and waterskiers in Marion, Yamhill, Clackamas, Multnomah and Columbia counties (done 5/24).
 - Direct mail to 900 large-boat owners (30' plus) in Multnomah, Columbia and Clackamas counties (done 5/24).
 - Direct mail to 500 waterfront homeowners in Clackamas and Multnomah counties (due mid-June).
 - Saturation patrols focusing on wake, noise and alcohol violations (July / August).
 - Implementation of Clackamas County noise ordinance specifically to address high-powered loudspeakers on boats in the water (ongoing). To report excessively loud, disruptive music, please report to Clackamas County Sheriff Department.
 - Printing and distribution of 100 new "Please Don't Wake Me" signs, which are available on request (ongoing). Send us your address and we'll mail or deliver.
 - Boat Ramp flyer hand-outs. Volunteers will provide wakeboard and yacht flyers to boaters at boat ramps on key weekends (ongoing).
 - Banners: Five large Wakeboard banners noting fines and violations available for launch point education or loan (ongoing).
 - US Coast Guard Auxiliary education patrols (July / August).
 - Media releases and education efforts (May 24).
 - Wake Water - Bottled water with educational label (all donated to OSMB) for boater contacts (ongoing).
- Dealer visits: Encourage dealers to provide the "Play Away" message and explain the issue to customers (Contacts in January, additional in June).
 - Marina visits: Provide handouts, signs and banners to marinas that serve wakeboarders and yachters and encourage participation in outreach (May 25, ongoing).
 - Regulation study: Review other state efforts to address wake complaints (ongoing).
 - Web page improvement and maintenance (ongoing).



Willamette River Boat Wake Survey RESULTS

The [Willamette River homeowner](#) survey results are in...

The Marine Board directed staff at the January Board meeting to create a new wake workgroup that includes representation from a variety of stakeholders: homeowners, dealers, industry, users, law enforcement, and wake boarders. The Board also directed staff to investigate a dedicated law enforcement presence on the Willamette River to enforce noise and wake concerns. Representatives from the new wake workgroup will work with the Marine Board to improve education and outreach in the area.

This effort will continue into the spring with regular updates to this webpage.

For more information, contact Randy Henry, Policy and Planning Analyst at (503) 378-2611.



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- State Directories
- Agencies A to Z
- Oregon Administrative Rules
- Oregon Revised Statutes
- Oregon - an Equal Opportunity Employer
- About Oregon.gov



WEB SITE LINKS

- Text Only Site
- Accessibility
- Oregon.gov
- File Formats
- Privacy Policy
- Site Map
- Web Site Feedback

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