

2009 Boating Laws Update

By Town of East Troy Police, Chief Jim Surges

Instead of being educated about our boating laws through an encounter with our patrol boat, a review of our boating laws may prove less painful.

Slow-No-Wake-A speed no greater than is necessary to steer your boat. This speed must be observed during the following circumstances:

1. 150' from shore.
2. 100 feet from any pier, raft, moored boat, skin diver's flag, or a swimmer.
3. While traversing any channel on Lake Beulah.
4. Between shore and any slow-no-wake buoy located along the shoreline. Although it is often difficult to determine distance with certainty, please err on the side of safety.

Age Restrictions

1. No one under the age of 10 may operate a motorboat.
2. No one under the age of 12 may operate a personal water-craft (generic term - jet ski or PWC).
3. Persons between 10 and 12 may operate a motorboat (except PWC) if accompanied by a parent or guardian, or a person at least 18 years of age designated by a parent or guardian.
4. Persons 12 thru 16 may operate a motorboat under the requirements of number 3 above, or if they have successfully completed a DNR Boating Safety Course and possess a certificate. To operate a PWC, persons at least 12 but under 16 years of age must be in possession of a valid, state approved boating safety certificate. (Parental supervision is not a substitute for a safety certificate.)

Speed Restrictions

1. On Saturdays, Sundays and Holidays, a boat must observe the Slow-No-Wake rule from 6 PM to 10 AM. This includes Saturday morning. If your boat's speedometer does not work at low speeds, or you have no speedometer, if you are on plane, you're going too fast.
2. A boater must travel no faster than is reasonable and prudent under the existing conditions. Sorry this is so vague. There is no real speed limit on lake Beulah. If the speed of your boat is placing you or someone else in danger, based on what the officer sees, you may be cited. Therefore, open water with traffic is the place to enjoy your boat's speed. Once other traffic enters the scene or you approach areas with limited sight distance, you must reduce your speed accordingly.

Water-skiing

1. Skiing is allowed only from 10:00 AM until sunset, Monday through Friday, and between 10:00 AM until 6:00 PM on Saturdays, Sundays and Holidays. (The weekday 10:00 AM start rule is frequently violated – please advise new-comers to our lake)

2. Use of a Personal Flotation Device is strongly recommended while water-skiing on Lake Beulah.
3. During weekends and holidays on Lake Beulah, you may only use one tow-rope behind your boat at a time, therefore only single skiing is allowed. If you tow a device that can carry several people, you may do so as long as only one tow-rope is used.
4. The boat and skier are a complete package. The skier as well as the boat must stay clear of areas requiring slow-no-wake. Therefore, pulling skiers from shore or dropping them off is prohibited. If you have someone who cannot deep-water start, there are several, places on the lake with shallow areas which are not in slow-no-wake zones.
5. Each boat towing a skier must have one competent observer in the boat in addition to the driver.

Personal Water Craft

(jet skis, wave runners, et al)

1. All persons riding a PWC must wear a PFD (life vest).
2. It is illegal to operate a PWC while facing backwards.
3. If a PWC is within 100' of any other craft, including other PWC's, the PWC must not exceed a speed of slow-no-wake.
5. Remember that PWC's are motorboats. All additional boating laws apply to them as well, such as registration, etc.
6. If you use your PWC to tow a skier, you must use a PWC designed for at least three people. You must have a competent observer aboard as well. One place on the PWC must remain vacant in case your skier needs transport.

Miscellaneous

1. You must have one PFD for each person on board.
2. You must have your front and rear light operating if you are out after sunset. Check these lights before you leave your residence if you know you are going to stay out late.
3. Operating a boat while under the influence of alcohol or other drugs is illegal. Any accident on the water is considered serious due to the environment where it occurs. Therefore, please be sensible about alcohol consumption while you are around the water.
4. Sailboats 12 feet and larger must be registered and display their registration numbers.