

North Lake Stewardship Committee

Phase 2 Survey Results | 2 December 2020



A Special Project of the North Lake Management District

Executive Summary

Attached you will find the 2020 Phase 2 Survey results which describe North Lake resident opinions regarding the North Lake Management District (NLMD) “Safe Boater Guidelines”.

These boater guidelines were introduced to the North Lake community in early summer 2019. The present survey reflects opinions formed after two summer seasons of guideline use. The intent of the Safe Boater Guidelines is to preserve a lake culture which self-regulates boater conduct, water use safety and equitable use of North Lake. The Phase 2 survey results are similar to Phase 1 survey findings published in the Fall of 2019 in the following ways:

- A high percentage of North Lake residents are aware of the Safe Boater Guidelines
- The Safe Boater Guidelines enjoy majority support among lake residents
- North Lake supports a wide array of recreational lake use including pontoon boats, jet skis, water ski boats, kayaks, canoes, paddle boards, windsurfers, sailboats, fishing boats, wakeboard boats and swimmers
- There is a stated concern among lake residents to preserve water quality and protect shoreline integrity
- There is a stable high percentage of residents who favor a self-regulatory model for control of boating activities on North Lake

North Lake residents are strongly encouraged to read the Phase 2 survey report in its entirety to be fully informed on these important issues.

Introduction

The North Lake Management District (NLMD) has sponsored this survey to better understand the impact of the Safe Boater Guidelines introduced in the summer of 2019. The results of this survey will be used to inform the decision-making process of the NLMD regarding the Safe Boater Guidelines. By sharing this report, the NLMD encourages community members – North Lake residents and users – to review the results and share any additional feedback or commentary with the North Lake Stewardship Committee (NLSC).

To share your feedback with the North Lake Stewardship Committee (NLSC), please reach out to NLMD.org and follow prompts.

Safe Boater Guidelines Background

The Safe Boater Guidelines were introduced in the summer of 2019. They were an outgrowth of a Lake Usage Study Committee, appointed by the NLMD, to address concerns with wakeboard boat activity and large wave impacts on North Lake in 2018.

The Safe Boater Guidelines can be found in Appendix B to this report.

Survey Methodology and Distribution

The survey distributed by the North Lake Stewardship Committee (NLSC) consists of nine questions covering awareness of and reaction to the boater guidelines. The questions were crafted to solicit yes / no answers to several topic areas and to provide for open-ended comments by respondents. The survey questionnaire included a shortened version of the guidelines to assure validity regarding the survey item content.

The NLSC has distributed the survey twice. Both distributions achieved a high enough response rate to reasonably rely on the results of this survey for understanding the opinions of North Lake residents. Respondents were given 35 days to complete and return their surveys.

Phase 1	Phase 2
<i>Distributed</i> Summer 2019	<i>Distributed</i> Summer 2020
228 <i>surveys sent to registered property owners on North Lake</i>	228 <i>surveys sent to registered property owners on North Lake</i>
118 surveys returned ¹	111 surveys returned
52% <i>response rate</i>	49% <i>response rate</i>
<i>Throughout this report, Phase 1 results will be reflected in green, and Phase 2 results will be reflected in blue.</i>	

This report summarizes the Phase 2 (Year 2) survey results and provides comparative commentary to Phase 1 results.

Survey Results

This report attempts to faithfully and concisely present the results of the survey data. It captures nominal data percentages and provides categorical summaries of open-ended responses. Appendix A to this report captures all open-ended responses received. Survey data counts were independently reviewed by members of the North Lake Stewardship Committee to assure the integrity of the statistical analysis.

Question 1: Familiarity with Safe Boater Guidelines

“Are you familiar with the Safe Boater Guidelines?”

A majority (84%) of Year 2 respondents indicated ‘Yes’ and the remainder of respondents (16%) elected not to answer. It is important to note that not responding to the question does not necessarily indicate a lack of familiarity with the Safe Boater

¹ Returned is defined as having at least one question answered, and responses are reasonably legible.

Guidelines. This is similar to the 2019 (Phase 1) responses which indicated 99% of respondents were familiar with the guidelines.

Question 2: Lake Usage

“Can you briefly describe how you use the lake? Please estimate hours per week or weekend use if possible.”

Similar to 2019, ‘Pontoon’ was the most mentioned boater activity in the 2020 survey results with 87 respondents mentioning the activity. Other top activities for 2020 include: kayaking or canoeing, water-skiing and tubing, fishing, and paddle boarding. This is generally consistent with 2019 results. Similarly, most respondents report using the lake on both weekdays and weekends. There is one notable difference from 2019 results. In 2020, respondents fell into two primary categories at either end of the spectrum of weekly lake usage. 23% reported the minimum weekly lake usage (0 - 3 hours per week) and 29% reported 15 or more hours of weekly lake usage. The remainder of respondents fell into smaller percentages of use brackets. (See Figure 3)

The most-mentioned activities in 2020 and 2019 are (in order):

Rank	2019	2020
1	Pontoon	Pontoon
2	Water-ski / Tube	Kayak / Canoe
3	Kayak / Canoe	Water-ski / Tube
4	Paddleboard & Fishing	Fishing
5	Wakeboard / Wake surfing	Paddleboard

Paddleboat, jet-ski, swimming, and windsurfing were mentioned for the first time in the 2020 results.

FIGURE 1: PERCENTAGE OF LAKE USE BY ACTIVITY

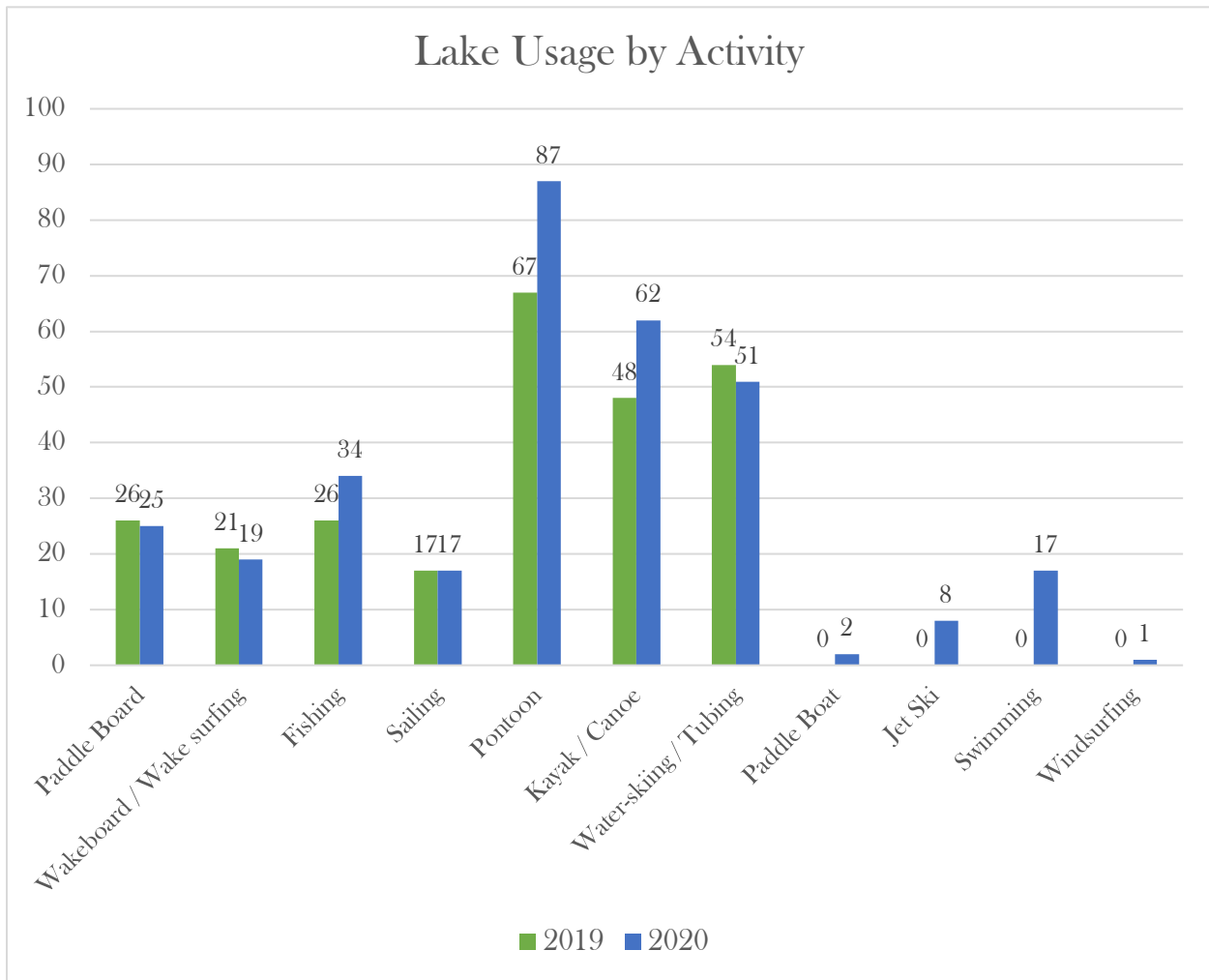


Figure 1 reflects both 2019 and 2020 usage categories. Respondents were able to report lake usage in multiple categories and Figure 1 demonstrates the number of times each category was mentioned in each phase.

In both 2019 and 2020, ‘Pontoon’ is the activity most mentioned by survey respondents. The 2020 results indicate an increase in ‘Pontoon’ usage with 20 additional mentions in 2020.

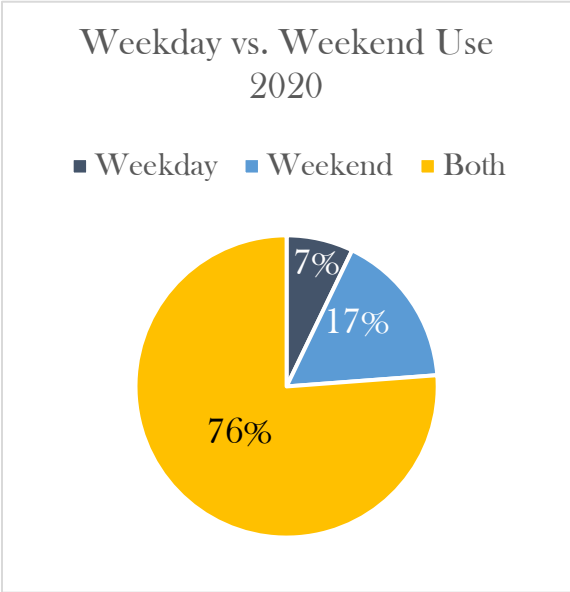


FIGURE 2: WEEKDAY VS WEEKEND LAKE USE

The data reflected in Figure 2 shows the majority (76%) of lake users are active on both weekdays and weekends. This is consistent with the reported usage in 2019, with 84% of respondents using the lake on both weekdays and weekends.

Notably, weekday-only users make up a larger portion of respondents in 2020 (7%) than in 2019 (1%).

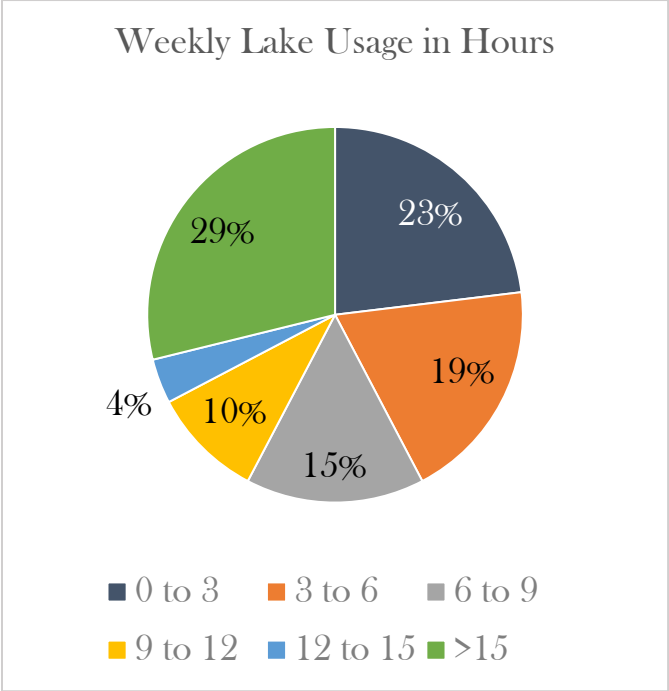


FIGURE 3: HOURS PER WEEK LAKE USE

The survey requested respondents to estimate hourly lake use by 3-hour category. Of the 52 collected responses to this question, most indicated either less than 3 hours or more than 15 hours of use - indicating two clear groups of lake users. This is a variance from 2019 results, where responses were more evenly distributed across all categories.

Question 3: Commentary on Safe Boater Guidelines

“Do you have any comments on the safe boater guidelines as you understand them?”

73% of respondents provided comments in response to this question. The principle comments mentioned were categorized into seven content areas as shown in Figure 4. (These topics were selected based on keywords and sentiment common across multiple comments). Figure 4 below presents the full list of topics and the number of comments attributed to each topic. One comment can be attributed to multiple topics if it includes the relevant keywords or expresses the appropriate sentiment. There was a total of 59 comments provided in the 2020 distribution of the survey. These comments are available for review in Appendix A to this report.

FIGURE 4: COMMENTARY ON SAFE BOATER GUIDELINES

	Topic Area	Comment Count
1	Wake Board Boats	11 of 59 (18%)
2	Enforcement Issues	11 of 59 (18%)
3	Slow No Wake	7 of 59 (11.8%)
4	Shoreline and Water Quality	5 of 59 (8.4%)
5	Clockwise Boat Traffic	4 of 59 (7.6%)
6	Loud Music	3 of 59 (5%)
7	Jet Ski Usage	3 of 59 (5%)

Question 4: Safe Boater Guideline Understanding

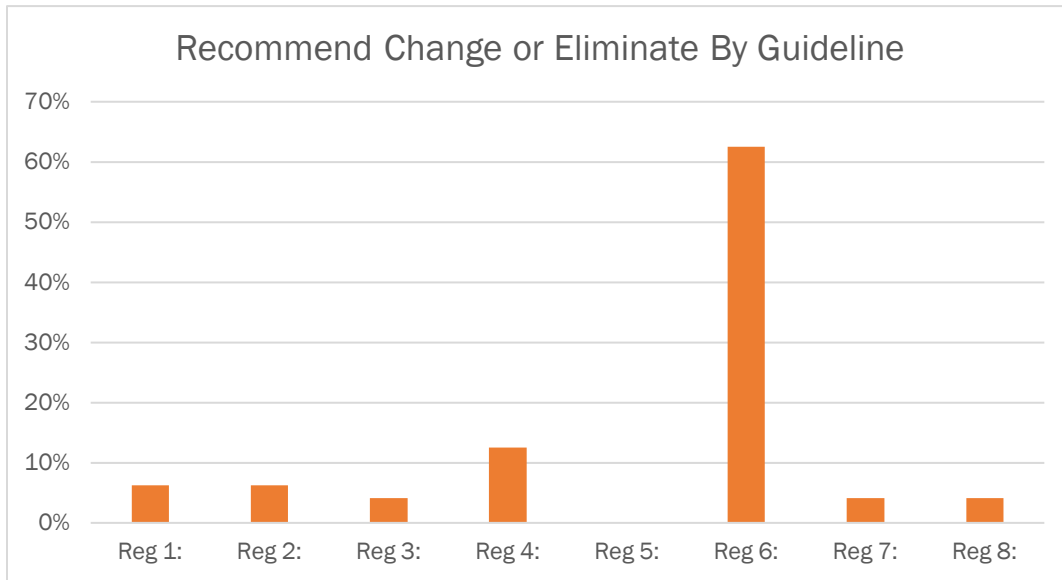
Are there any guidelines you do not understand?

Consistent with 2019 responses, the majority of 2020 respondents (86%) indicated that they understand the guidelines.

Question 5: Guideline Changes

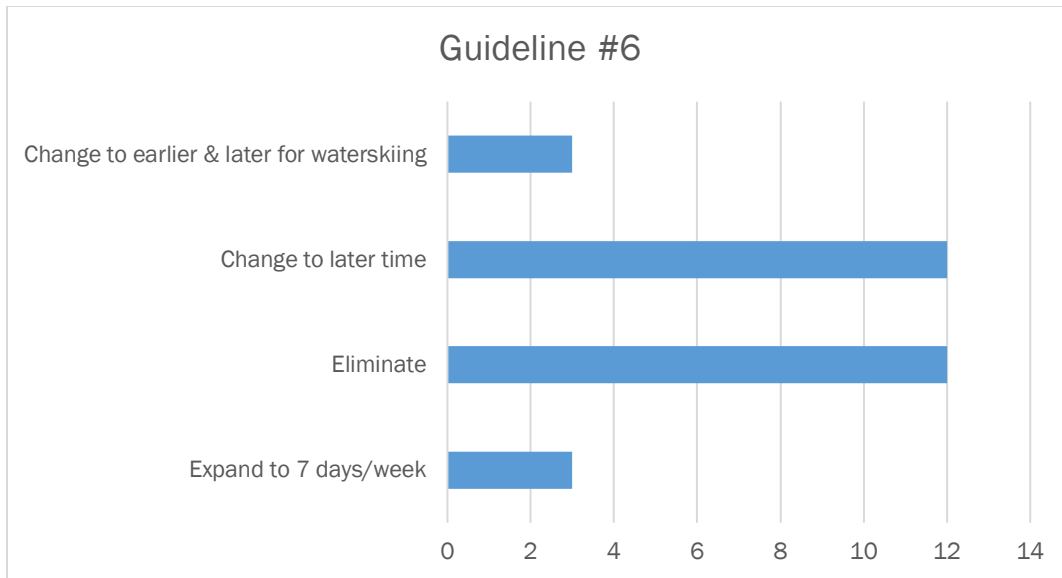
Are there any guidelines you would like changed and / or eliminated? If so, which one(s) and why?

Figure 5: Percent Recommended Change of Specific Guideline



Consistent with 2019 data, the current 2020 survey respondents have again expressed interest in either reducing, enlarging or eliminating the slow no wake guideline (#6). The present survey enlarged upon the slow no wake question as reflected in Figure 6 below.

Figure 6: 2020 Survey Responses Regarding Slow No Wake Guideline #6



The NLMD will review this issue and promulgate guidance for the 2021 season.

Study Item Number 6: Guidelines as a Positive

Do you feel the guidelines have had a positive impact on the Lake?

A majority of respondents to the 2020 survey indicate that the guidelines have had a positive effect on North Lake (72%). This percentage is *up* compared to the 2019 survey data which revealed 66% positive impact from the guidelines being introduced. 13% in the present study indicate they are “unsure” as to the impact of the guidelines, while 6.6% indicate “no effect” and 8.8% respond with a “not positive” response. This 2020 survey study item elicited a large number of spontaneous comments which were similar in content. Essentially these comments focused upon concerns over a small number of boaters who persist in ignoring or “flaunting” the Safe Boater Guidelines. A variety of recommendations were offered to address this issue. (See Appendix A)

Study Item Number 7: Guidelines as a Negative

“Do you feel the guidelines have had a negative effect on the Lake and if so, can you describe what that is” ?

A large percentage of 2020 survey respondents indicate that the guidelines have ***not had a negative effect*** on the lake (95%). This response is ***up*** considerably from the 2019 survey results which found only 56% of respondents indicating that the guidelines did not have any negative effects. Also of interest, the rather large number of blank responses (31%) from the 2019 survey were not seen in this year’s data. This is suggestive of a “settling of opinion” across the 2 year term of the impact study.

Study Item Number 8: Guideline Impact on Boater Behavior

“Have the Safe Boater Guidelines changed the way you operate your boat and or the way your kids or guests operate your boats” ?

The respondent group on the 2020 survey responds 44% yes to changes in boater operations and 56% no change. The 2019 data showed a similar level of positive change in boater operations (42%) and a smaller percentage (36%) of no change in operations. The remainder of 2019 data was NA.

Study Item Number 9: Voluntary verse Permanent Rules

“Would you like the guidelines to become a permanent set of rules, enforced by law, or remain voluntary” ?

A large number of respondents (49%) in the 2020 survey indicate a preference for voluntary adherence to Safe Boater Guidelines as opposed to making the guidelines permanent and enforceable by law. This compares favorably with 2019 survey data which also revealed a 50% preference for voluntary adherence.

Readers of this report are reminded that the results are being forwarded to the NLMD for further action (i.e., changes to Guidelines for the 2021 season).

Respectfully Submitted

North Lake Stewardship Committee (NLSC)

Appendix A

2020 Phase 2 (Year 2) Survey Comments Summary*

*Direct Quotations from Surveys

Topic Area 1 Wake Board Boats

- 1) Biggest change needed is to restrict wake boat use. When the waves are so high to destroy the shoreline and almost roll your pontoon something needs to be done.
- 2) Earlier surveys asked my opinion of wake board boats and I was ambivalent. Now I would share that I am opposed to them due to destruction of shoreline.
- 3) Review wakeboard boat usage-hours.
- 4) Limit number of wakeboard boats – small lake is too small for all of them.
- 5) Although probably not possible, be more aggressive on limiting/eliminating wakeboard boats.
- 6) Wakeboard boats are the major problem. They should be more heavily regulated or not allowed.
- 7) Wave inducing boats are having a major detrimental effect on the lake. Large waves cause erosion and move sediment increasing weed growth.
- 8) Wake boat operation should be banned from little lake. They are the primary cause of silt travel with devastating effects on weed growth, spawning and shoreline erosion. Action is needed now.
- 9) Our main concern is the surf boats-churning up the lake and beating up the shoreline.
- 10) Minnesota is doing a study on the impact of wake boats on lakes now-watch for it.
- 11) Outlaw wake boarding.

Topic Area 2 Enforcement

- 1) I would like to see a “show” of police or DNR so boaters would be more mindful of things like fishing licenses, fire extinguishers, life jackets, unsafe operations.
- 2) Need to enforce slow-no wake on weekends/holidays.
- 3) We feel there is an increased disregard for the laws that are already in place; no life jackets wakeboarding, jet skiing etc. and evasive moves needed to avoid jet skis.
- 4) Major offenders should be approached by Merton and Chenequa Boat Patrols.
- 5) Not sure how they can be enforced but it would be nice if warnings could be given to frequent violators.
- 6) A few do not follow the rules–too bad they are not considerate.
- 7) Voluntary adherence to the guidelines is not happening at this time.
- 8) Jet skis do not follow speed limit and do not operate safely.

- 9) Even though 80% of lake people observe the guidelines there are several landowners who pay no attention. I worry that when the lake is open to the public there will be bigger problems. Perhaps a stiff fine for not following guidelines is in order.
- 10) Maybe there should be a committee that receives complaints and notifies offenders so that neighbors don't have to say anything to neighbors.
- 11) We should focus on those breaking the rules, particularly the unsafe jet ski and boaters.

Topic Area 3 **Slow No Wake**

- 1) Remove guideline # 6.
- 2) I would like to see one weekday each week set aside for non-motorized boats.
- 3) Make weekend slow/no wake after 6 pm enforced by lake patrol/police.
- 4) Law: Slow/No wake >4 pm 7 days / week.
- 5) I would rescind #6 until public access.
- 6) No wake after 6 pm has obviously been a big disappointment to us.
- 7) Have no wake start every day at 7:30 pm or sunset whichever is first.

Topic Area 4 **Shoreline and Water Quality**

- 1) The lake is a delicate ecosystem which is in serious decline. Shoreline erosion/changes are impacting lake life/creatures.
- 2) Boat traffic in weedy areas is a problem and should be avoided. Props are cutting and spreading invasive species-especially at the north end of the big lake.
- 3) Minimal use of fertilizers & pesticides within 50' of shoreline. Buffer strips along shoreline.
- 4) More concerned about the health of the lake.
- 5) Let's please keep shoreline erosion to a minimum. It will help to maintain property values.

Topic Area 5 **Clockwise Boat Traffic**

- 1) Regular boat traffic should follow counter clockwise direction.
- 2) Counter clockwise permanent!
- 3) Please reinforce the correct direction of boat traffic.
- 4) Counter clockwise traffic should be added to the guidelines for all to follow to improve safety.

Topic Area 6 **Loud Music**

- 1) Loud music from boats is irritating.
- 2) Would like to see guidelines enforced regarding loud music/inappropriate music especially at the sandbar.
- 3) The kids are not turning down the music. No littering-someone found 10 beer cans by the sunken island.

Topic Area 7 Jet Ski Usage

- 1) Jet skis do not follow speed limits and do not operate safely.
- 2) Wave Runner's need some rules - chaotic with them all over the place.
- 3) Need to be inclusive with jet skis. Are they considered wake producing? Do they understand how the guidelines apply?

Topic Area 8 Other

- 1) There should be an orientation for all owners and families new to the lake in the last five years.
- 2) Are there any restrictions to seaplanes landing on North Lake? Had a dangerous encounter 8/20.
- 3) Barges allowed on the lake should have restrictions too-concern for proper cleaning for invasive species and trenching of shallow lake bed.
- 4) Not for the idea of a public launch - if anything carry on like Beaver Lake would be better suited to North Lake.
- 5) North Lake is a sailing lake and none of the guidelines address power boat behavior when sailing events are taking place.
- 6) There are several anchored swim raft platforms that are eye sores, covered with bird waste-ban them!
- 7) We appreciate the thankless efforts of the committee and hope that over time these guidelines will evolve into a compatible and workable set of rules for the lake.
- 8) Rules should not apply before Memorial day or after Labor Day and exclude fisherman/boats not pulling objects at a minimum.
- 9) Speed limits should be increased to 40 mph so that skiers are aren't always breaking the law.
- 10) There appears to be a chasm between the ages of those wanting more restrictions and those Who feel we should use the lake as the owner chooses.
- 11) NLMD needs to proofread /fact check emails prior to distribution to prevent corrections.
- 12) Please go back to the original guidelines written and approved and published 7/1/19 to resolve conflict and confusion.
- 13) We don't need more enforcement traffic on our Lake.
- 14) Not all boats have the same size wake so 250' from shore isn't necessary.

Appendix B

SAFE BOATER GUIDELINES (2019-2020)

Due to complaints about large waves and their impact on North Lake and other users (fishing, kayaking, paddleboating), the Commissioners approved voluntary rules as a test for the 2019-2020 season.

These rules are as follows:

1. All boats with wakes stay 250 feet from shoreline (easy sight line is 2 ½ times the distance of most piers on the lake).
2. Wake Board Boats to operate near the middle of the Lake to avoid large wave impacts to shoreline.
3. Do not drive boats over sandbars on the Lake.
4. Non-wake producing boats (kayaks, canoes, paddleboards, pontoons, etc.) stay within the 250' shoreline protection zone when wake producing vessels are operating.
5. Keep all onboard boat music to a reasonable level.
6. Slow No Wake after 6:00 pm on Weekends (Sat/Sun) and Holidays through the 2020 season.
7. Water ski boats use a "**stop and drop pattern**". If you don't know what this is, ask us.
8. Please be courteous and thoughtful when operating boats on North Lake.

A copy of these voluntary rules are in the box below. Please take a copy for easy reference.

Thank you for your consideration.

NLMD Commissioners