Proposed Shuswap River Boating Regulations Open House

Welcome, and thank you for attending this Open House regarding proposed boating regulations for the Shuswap River.

A partnership of the Regional District North Okanagan, Vernon Protective Services – Safe Communities Unit, Lower Shuswap Stewardship Society, Enderby and District Service Commission, Enderby and District Chamber of Commerce and the City of Enderby are seeking feedback on proposed boating regulations for the Shuswap River.

We are just in the initial stages of consultation on the boating regulations and there are a number of opportunities for you to provide feedback.

- Provide your responses on the comment sheets here today
- Complete the survey at www.rdno.ca/boating, or request a paper copy.
- Provide comment by email to sustainability@rdno.ca

By providing your input on the proposed regulations we can gain an understanding of the level of support or non-support that exists for the proposed regulations and what impact the boating regulations would have on river users and the community. This feedback will provide direction on how the process continues.
What Has Been Done to Address Concerns Regarding Motorized Boats on the Shuswap River Historically?

Historically, a number of initiatives have been undertaken to address concerns with respect to the impacts of motorized vessels and recreation in general on the Shuswap River. These initiatives have been undertaken by a range of organizations.


2008-2013: RDNO and RCMP have a Memorandum of Understanding to provide enhanced boat patrols on the Shuswap River and a number of lakes in the North Okanagan to address boating safety.

2009 onward: Establishment of the River Watch program run by the RCMP Safe Communities Unit. Illegal and irresponsible behavior on the Shuswap River can be reported to the North Okanagan Safe Communities Officer.

2010 onward: The Lower Shuswap Stewardship Society sponsor and organize the annual No Wake Flotilla.

2010 onward: Shuswap River Ambassadors program is run each summer by the Enderby and District Chamber of Commerce. Ambassadors communicate information with respect to safety, environmental protection and responsible use to recreational river users, on-site.

2011 onward: North Okanagan Safe Communities Officer visits local boat launches weekly during the summer. Speaks with boaters about their intended destination and encourages them to stick to the lakes and stay off the river to prevent environmental damage and safety issues with respect to other river users.

2014 onward: RDNO and the Conservation Officer Service have an agreement to provide enhanced boat patrols on the Shuswap River along with Mabel and Sugar Lakes to address boating safety.
We are currently in the initial stages of seeking feedback on proposed boating regulations for the Shuswap River.

The proposed Shuswap River Boating Regulations came from recommendations within the Shuswap River Watershed Sustainability Plan (SRWSP).

**Development of the SRWSP**

The development of the SRWSP was a three year process with significant community input. The Goals, Objectives and Strategies within the plan reflect the common issues and concerns raised through public participation in the plan development, which cover a wide spectrum of issues including land use, protection of the natural environment, recreation, governance and inter-agency relations.

**Identification of implementation priorities for the SRWSP**

After the SRWSP was endorsed by the RDNO Board of Directors in April 2014, implementation priorities were identified, including exploring boating regulations on the Shuswap River.

**Consultation on Proposed Regulations**

A partnership of interested organizations made up of RDNO, Vernon Protective Services – Safe Communities Unit, Lower Shuswap Stewardship Society, Enderby and District Service Commission, Enderby and District Chamber of Commerce and the City of Enderby are now seeking feedback on the proposed regulations. Federal and provincial government departments have provided technical input on the proposed regulations and will continue to provide guidance throughout the process.
We are currently in the initial stages of seeking feedback on proposed boating regulations for the Shuswap River.

Based on the feedback received a number of options exist moving forward:

1. Initiate an application to Transport Canada for the boating regulations as currently proposed.

2. Consult further on alternative options.

3. Do not initiate an application to Transport Canada

Before any application can be made to Transport Canada, an evaluation of how proposed regulations may impact health, safety, environment, economy, public security, business, trade, society and culture will need to be undertaken as well as a cost-benefit analysis. This has not yet been done.

By providing your input on the proposed regulations we can gain an understanding of the level of support or non-support that exists for the proposed regulations and what impact the boating regulations would have on river users and the community.

Please take the time to complete the survey at www.rdno.ca/boating and/or provide comments today on the comment boards.
The proposed boating regulations have been developed to address a number of community concerns raised with respect to the impacts of motorized vessels on the Shuswap River over the past 20 years. These concerns were once again identified during the development of the Shuswap River Watershed Sustainability Plan.

The intent of the proposed Shuswap River boating regulations is to:

- improve recreational safety
- reduce bank erosion
- reduce impacts on salmon and other fish and wildlife
- reduce conflict between users

The stretches of the Shuswap River affected by the proposed regulations differ in the level and type of recreational use, the impacts experienced and the values being protected. The lower stretches of the Lower Shuswap River experience the most recreation use including motorized boats while the stretches upstream of Enderby and upstream of Mabel Lake, provide extensive salmon spawning and rearing habitat. The timing of potential impacts of motorized boats differs based on the values being impacted. Safety, user conflicts and erosion concerns exist predominantly during the summer months of late June, July and August. Concerns with respect to disturbance to fish and wildlife exist in the Spring when fry are emerging from eggs and water fowl are nesting and during the fall when Salmonids are spawning.
Scientific studies have shown that motorboats can cause erosion of river banks, which can result in an increase in sedimentation and turbidity of water, destruction of riparian vegetation, and result in a loss of land (Asplund, 2000; Dorava and Moore, 1997; Stelfox, 1995). Local studies undertaken on the Shuswap River in 2013 and 2014 support this.

Two University of British Columbia studies were undertaken on the Lower Shuswap River in 2013 and 2014 looking at erosion forces on the river banks. The primary focus of the 2013 study was monitoring and documenting the rate of bank erosion with a secondary focus of assessing the potential impact of boat wakes on bank erosion. This study indicated that boat wakes contribute to erosion on the Shuswap River, but the extent was difficult to quantify and natural causes were also a major contributor to erosion (Laderoute, 2014).

The 2014 study built on the 2013 study by assessing the rate of bank erosion during the spring freshet (May-July 2014) and assessing the near-bank flow mechanisms responsible for erosion. Results of the 2014 study indicate that the average annual flooding event does not exert enough force to erode river bank material at the study site and wakes produced by boating is the only other factor at the site capable of exerting enough force on the river banks to dislodge material continuously over the summer period. However, the influence of boat wakes on the bank is controlled by river stage because the height of the water in the river determines at what height on the bank wave energy is dissipated. Consequently, river stage and boat wake go hand-in-hand in initiating bank morphology change (Cameron, 2015).
What Concerns Exist?

Impacts on fish and wildlife

The main concerns that exist with respect to motorized boats and fish and wildlife include:

- disturbance to nesting birds
- physical disturbance to salmon spawning grounds in shallow water
- increased turbidity and sedimentation resulting in smothering of fish eggs
- shock and concussion caused by jet engines
- physical stranding of fry after jet boat passage.

These concerns are not unique to the Shuswap River. The following notice was issued for the Cariboo area by the Cariboo Chilcotin Conservation Society:

Boating through or near sensitive shallow stream habitats can cause large wakes and bottom pressure.

Surveys conducted in rivers of the Cariboo have shown that juvenile fish are dying in large numbers from being washed-up and stranded in sandbars and mudflats. The source of the disturbances has been found to be the passage of large boats, including jet boats. These boat wakes and bottom pressure increase stream bank erosion, disrupt spawning adults, strand juvenile fish and increase the mortality of incubating eggs. Also, sediment resulting from a boat wake can smother incubating eggs and fish food sources, as well as harm fish by damaging their gills.

Local community members report seeing some of these impacts first hand including fry stranding after boat passage and disturbance to spawning grounds after fish passage.
What Concerns Exist?

Safety

Safety is a concern associated with motorized boats on the Shuswap River. The Shuswap River is used extensively in the summer months by both motorized and non-motorized recreationalists. Concerns exist with respect to the potential for collisions between motorized and non-motorized recreationists, especially where motorized boats are travelling quickly on stretches of the river with limited visibility, and swamping/tipping of smaller vessels by large wakes. No reports exist of collisions to date, however anecdotal accounts suggest numerous near-misses.

Reduce Conflict Between Users

All of the concerns described previously have lead to a situation where conflict exists between different recreation users and between recreation users and land owners. Boating regulations are being proposed as one possible solution to reduce such conflicts.
Transport Canada Vessel Operating Restriction Regulations

Vessel Operation Restriction Regulations are established under the Canada Shipping Act, 2001 (CSA 2001.) They may help achieve safety, environmental or public interest objectives. The restrictions may:

- Prohibit a sporting, recreational or public event or activity
- Restrict towing activities on any sporting or recreational equipment including wake surfing
  - Addresses potential impacts of vessels towing, but not potential impacts of other motorized vessels.
- Impose speed limits
  - Does not limit any type of vessel, requires significant resources to enforce
- Limit engine power or type of propulsion
  - Still allows for motorized vessels, but limited to a size that can be propelled by permitted engine type
- Prohibit all boats
  - Prevents the option of any motorized vessels

Restrictions can apply at all times or be specific to certain times of the day, week, month or year. They can also target a particular type or types of craft on a waterway or specific stretches of a waterway.
Thank you for attending this Open House regarding the proposed boating regulations for the Shuswap River.

To ensure your view on the Proposed boating regulations is captured please take the time to do one or more of the following:

- Provide your responses on the comment sheets here today
- Complete the survey at www.rdno.ca/boating, or request a paper copy.
- Provide comment by email to sustainability@rdno.ca

By providing your input on the proposed regulations we can gain an understanding of the level of support or non-support that exists for the proposed regulations and what impact the boating regulations would have on river users and the community. This feedback will provide direction on how the process continues.