

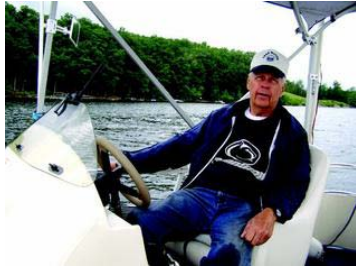
By Tammy Compton

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<http://www.wayneindependent.com/news/x488821801/Boaters-urged-to-drive-play-sensibly>

Boaters urged to drive, play sensibly



Region -

As thousands of boaters flock to Lake Wallenpaupack for the Fourth of July fireworks, Waterways Conservation Officer Bob Plumb urges everyone to “drive sensibly.”

With over 2000 boats expected, concentrated from Mangan Cove down to Eppley Island, Plumb says, “The big thing that happens there is, once the fireworks are over, everybody wants to go home. And it’s dark. The big thing that I want to say is, just drive sensibly. Observe the speed limit at night. The speed limit on this lake at night is no more than 25 miles per hour. That’s seven days a week, 365 days a year ...I know that there are people out there that are speeding at night.

“There’s just so much that can happen out here. This is water ...It’s an entirely different ballgame out here, when you’re playing on the water,” said WCO Plumb, whose coverage area includes Lake Wallenpaupack, Pike County and parts of Southern Wayne.

“We want people out on the lake. We want them having a good time. Recreation is a good therapy for a lot of things,” Plumb says, but they also want people to be safe.

Safety is the same thing Lake Watch members promote on Lake Wallenpaupack. Andy Anderson, founder and president of the volunteer organization, says things have greatly improved on Lake Wallenpaupack since the group’s inception in 1998. They have 32 members and 16 privately owned boats.

“What we see is reckless driving. And this is the thing that disturbs us ... sometimes you’ve got wave runners or power boats who will see how close they can get to (sailboats or kayaks), so we kind of patrol along the shoreline,” Anderson said.

Other sporadic problems on the lake include boaters speeding in no-wake zones, water skiers skiing in restricted areas or skiing without a spotter. “We’ve witnessed where there was an inflated dummy acting as a spotter,” Anderson said. “We saw a dog sitting there. And we went up to him and said, ‘That dog can’t be a spotter.’ Oh, but he would bark when they fall off (was the response). We said, ‘That doesn’t count.’ We’ve seen it all.”

But conditions, Anderson said, are “getting better, not worse.” Education has been key, he said, pointing to the collective efforts of the Fish and Boat Commission, Lake Watch and Meg Welker with the PPL Environmental Center who teaches a Safe Boating course.

“We want everybody to be able to have a good time, every conceivable type of boat, but ...be aware. Be aware of your surroundings. Don’t create a disaster,” Anderson said.

By Tammy Compton

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Boating under the influence- as criminal as DUI

Region -

Boating under the influence (BUI) is like playing Russian roulette, says George Geisler, Law Enforcement Services, Team DUI, PA DUI Association.

“Operating a boat or vehicle under the influence is simply a huge, unnecessary risk,” Geisler said. “Operation of both vehicles and boats takes much skill, awareness and care. Either is

challenging enough when you are sober. Take away one's ability to perform the often simultaneous tasks of careful operation because of impairment, and you are simply playing 'Russian roulette.' An impaired driver is no different than playing with a loaded gun. Sooner or later it is going to go off, and someone is going to die! Why would anyone want to take such a risk?"

According to Director Dan Martin, Bureau of Boating and Access, "alcohol was a possible contributing factor" in two of eight fatal boating accidents reported in Pennsylvania last year.

Victim of drugs/alcohol

Asked if there was a story that stood out in his mind, of someone's life forever changed because of BUI or DUI, Geisler shared the following:

"On a Friday afternoon of the day before his high school graduation, a young man decided to go out on a canoe on a start park lake with two acquaintances. This young man was the only child of his parents and just a wonderful young man. Unfortunately his 'friends' were consuming alcoholic beverage and smoking marijuana.

"It was a hot sweltering day in June. We don't know whether the other two boys pushed him out of the boat or he jumped in the lake to cool off - we never really found out which. We do know that the two impaired boys remaining in the canoe kept operating the canoe in such a fashion as to keep pushing it away from the young man in the water who was trying to swim back to the boat. In so doing, he became exhausted and drowned.

"I accompanied the police to notify his parents that he was missing and presumed drowned. We found the parents that Friday evening enjoying themselves at the home of their friends. I will never forget the mother screaming and crying uncontrollably such that the family doctor need to be summoned to give her a tranquilizer. I also will never forget the father just going into a catatonic state of disbelief.

"It took us four days to recover his body. I can tell you to this day what that young man was wearing as the impression of his lifeless body floating face down in the water has never left me. The impact on the family of having lost their only child was unspeakable. I saw them age seemingly overnight as they worked with legal counsel to investigate a possible wrongful death law suit. As a father myself of an only son, I cannot imagine going through the rest of my life dealing forever with a tragedy that was unnecessarily caused by drug and alcohol impairment."

Boats collide on Big Lake

Alcohol was involved last year when two boats collided on Lake Wallenpaupack.

“We had a pretty bad boating accident last year, right before Memorial Day weekend,” said Waterways Conservation Officer Robert A. Plumb, Northeast Region, Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission. “It happened at night. Alcohol was a factor in it. Consequently, that person did get convicted of BUI.”

The crash occurred when a larger boat hit a stationary fishing boat. “There were two people that were pretty seriously injured off of that boat. No one was killed, but it put two guys in the hospital for a couple of weeks because of it,” WCO Plumb said.

“It’s just as big a problem on a boat to be drinking and driving as it is with a car. If you are a designated driver, if you’re the one that’s driving that boat, I would strongly suggest that you don’t drink at all,” he said.