

BOAT OPERATION

Applicability

This section applies to all marinas.

Background

Boat traffic and operation can have a significant impact on shallow water habitats. Boat wakes can have an erosive effect on shorelines and uproot submergent and emergent plants. This leads to reduced habitat for fish and wildlife and increases suspended sediment loads. Suspended sediment reduces the amount of sunlight penetrating the water column, shading out submerged plants that are important to fish for habitat



and oxygen production. As the suspended sediments settle, they can smother fish nests and habitat. Excessive suspended sediments also give water an unpleasant brown coloration.

Existing Federal and State Laws

Motorboats are restricted to idle speed within 200 feet of the shoreline of Lake Michigan and any other lake (IC 14-15-3-17). Within this near-shore zone, the only legal operations for motorboats are for trolling or to leave or enter a dock, pier, or wharf. Informational buoys are often placed to assist the boater in identifying the 200-foot near-shore zone, but the existence of these buoys is



not required to establish the offense. Where these informational buoys exist, they are white and marked with an orange rectangle and black lettering.

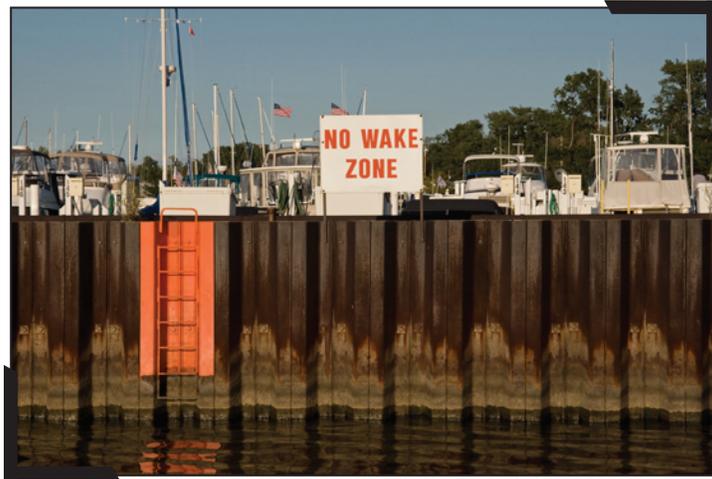
Best Management Practices

Listed below are a few boat operation best management practices that marinas can implement to help protect shallow water habitats in their marinas.

- Restrict boater traffic in shallow water areas.
- Establish no wake zones to reduce turbidity, shoreline erosion, and damage to the marina. Establishing a

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no-wake zone or a zone where boats are prohibited can be lawfully accomplished by the U.S. Coast Guard or the Natural Resources Commission but not by a private citizen. At the state level, a rule adoption would be required. A citizen could petition the NRC to establish a special boating zone. When such a petition is received, the Indiana Department of Natural Resources would form a committee to review the petition and make recommendations to the IDNR director and the NRC.



No wake zones can be established to protect shallow water habitat and help prevent shoreline erosion.

- Discourage power loading of boats at launch ramps as much as possible.