

City of Portland Willamette River Recreation Boating Survey--Selected Highlights
Spring 2011

Responses and Demographics

- 1,573 responses; over 2,200 individual comments.
- Respondents were older: over 70 % were at least 45; only 12% 34 or younger.
- 52% primarily motorized; 41% non-motorized; and 7% both.
- Fishers and skiers/wakeboarders dominated motorized response; dragonboaters non-motorized.

Facilities: Boaters have a range of concerns:

- lack of parking space or parking area security
- lack of longer-term tie-ups and of security at existing tie-ups
- dock/ramps in need of repair
- restroom availability (cleanliness, hours of operation, on-river needs)
- lack of facilities to access commercial services or areas of interest from the water.

Experiences:

- In terms of river-setting, overall the following were identified as a moderate or severe problem:
 - Poor river water quality: 75%
 - Too crowded: about 60%
 - Unsightly or dirty areas or riverbanks: 62%
 - Channel hazards: about 50%

Enforcement: Most boaters want improved enforcement of laws and regulations, including:

- dealing with “homeless boaters”
- enforcing no- or slow-wake zones, both around docks and newly-established areas.
(At the same time, some thought enforcement was already over-vigilant, interfering with their river experience.)

Education: Many recommended more boater education, including:

- better publicizing boating rules, generally;
- dock/boat ramp skills (e.g., requiring a trailer-backing test) and etiquette (proper use of lanes; sharing float space; etc.)
- improving understanding of effects of wakes on other users, house-boats, and moored boats;
- improving signage (dock rules, rules-of-the-road; navigation hazards).

Motorized / Non-motorized Views and Conflicts

- In general...
 - Motorized boaters tend to oppose what they see as closure of areas to their uses (“no wake zones”, feeling that the river can be—and needs to be—shared by all users. Many commenters indicated they felt the river is over-regulated. More vigilant enforcement against bad actors would allow more of this sharing. Further, as fee-paying boaters, they see restrictions on their use as favoring non-motorized boaters who pay no fees to support the facilities they use and the marine patrol that they call on. Motorized boaters often commented that non-motorized boaters don’t seem to know, or follow, boating rules (“uneducated”) or etiquette (“inconsiderate”); that they’re hard to see; tend to hog the channel, and exhibit a “holier-than-thou” attitude.
 - Non-motorized boaters tend to not only favor the newest no-wake zones, but would like more. They want vigilant enforcement of speed limits, and frequently related accounts of run-ins with motorized craft that resulted in capsizing, close-calls, or harassment. Some commenters suggested motorized boat operators perhaps simply didn’t understand the effect their wakes have on non-motorized craft (“uneducated”). Others found operator misbehavior more purposeful, (“disrespectful”) with many identifying personal watercraft a particular problem. Other problems included noise and fumes from motorized craft, and intoxicated operators.