



# Watch Your Wake

## RIDEAU CANAL

NATIONAL HISTORIC SITE OF CANADA



The Rideau Canal, Ontario's only UNESCO World Heritage Site is a valued national treasure. It invites and attracts a wide variety of recreational users, from power boaters to sailors, canoeists, kayakers, swimmers and varied shoreline users.

We all wish to enjoy the Rideau in our own way and we all have a responsibility to ensure that others enjoy the waterway to its fullest. To accomplish this, we need your support.

Every person in charge of a vessel should operate the vessel and control its wake in a manner that does not endanger the safety of themselves or other boaters. Special consideration should be given to small vessels such as canoes and kayaks.

Our waterway is fragile, with wildlife and shoreline habitat exposed to the elements and man-made hazards. It is at risk without proper use and management by everyone, including property owners and boaters.

This brochure provides some information and tips to help us all gain the maximum enjoyment possible from the Rideau Canal.



### DEFINITIONS

**Wake** - A disturbed column of water around and behind a pleasure craft as it makes its way through the water.

**Wash** - A specific component of the wake consisting of loose and broken water. It includes water thrown aft by the propeller and the waves that roll off the side of the boat.

**Careless Operation** - An offense under the Small Vessel Regulations that reads:

*"No person shall operate a small vessel in a careless manner without due care and without reasonable consideration for other persons."*

You are responsible for the cost of repair or restitution for damage and discomfort your boat causes to people, objects, wildlife and shoreline. Under the Contraventions Act, enforcement authorities can ticket offenders on the spot, instead of requiring them to appear in court. The fine for operating a vessel in a manner that endangers the safety of persons or property and for failure to control wake resulting in danger to the safety of persons or property is \$200.



### SPEED LIMITS

The Ontario Provincial Police patrol from Kingston to Burritts Rapids and the Ottawa Police

Service patrols from Burritts Rapids through Ottawa. Speed zones have been established along the navigation channels. All zones are posted with signs and regulated under the Boating Restrictions Regulations, part of the Canada Shipping Act.



There are two types of signs - the boundary markers (arrow signs) which identify the beginning and end of a speed zone, and speed limit signs (circles), which remind boaters to obey the speed limit while they are in the zone. Both types of signs are either posted on the shoreline, on structures, or are attached to floating white buoys adjacent to the navigation channel. Where posted, the speed limit is 10 km/hr (6 mph).

### WATCH YOUR WAKE

Boat wake and wash is a major problem along the Rideau Canal. While cruising close to shore, in narrow channels, near other boats, swimmers and docks, **operate as close to dead slow as possible** while maintaining steerage and control of your craft.



### Did You Know?

What is immediately on the surface after your boat passes is easy to see, although its true force and depth may not be easy to judge. There is also danger underneath your boat.

Drawdown caused by all boats, especially in narrow channels, can be more damaging than surface wash. Combined with propeller disturbances, your boat can easily damage the bottom of the river bed, disturbing habitat as well as washing away shoreline without your knowledge.

How your boat reacts with the water depends on its hull shape. All hulls, from deep vee planing hulls to displacement hulls can cause damage, depending on speed and other circumstances.

**Myth** - Planing hulls on plane create less wash and less damage.

**Fact** - On the surface, wash may have less height when the boat is on plane but the wave created is longer, faster, deeper and contains more energy. It is potentially more damaging, especially as it enters shallower water and rises above the surface.

**Myth** - Displacement hulls do not create wash that is damaging.

**Fact** - A displacement hull moving at a minimum speed causes less wash and usually of a lower height than that produced by a planing hull. However, a displacement hull may push a wave in front of it which, in narrow, shallow channels, can produce a return flow between the boat and the shore. This flow, combined with propeller-induced flow can scour the bottom and reverberate off the shoreline, causing significant damage.

## HAS THIS HAPPENED TO YOU?

*"...waves from a cruiser caused damage as items fell and crashed in the boat..."*

*"...fridge and cupboard contents strewn..."*



*"... I had concern for my safety in the canoe, where I had little ability to escape their path - most boat captains were unaware of the affect of their wake on small craft..."*

*"...while repairing our dock, the wash from a fast boat was so violent it threw my husband off his feet onto the dock and he cracked three ribs..."*

*"...commonly a wash is so violent that it throws water six or more feet high and soaks an area four feet from the shoreline - my fear is that one day a child will be thrown into the water as a result of the dangerous wash..."*

*"... in mid-summer, we were asked to tow a customer's pontoon boat which, while stopped in the water, had been turtled by a quick series of intense washes..."*

## WHAT CAN I DO?

- Watch your wash. **As you travel, watch behind you.** If your wash is sending other boats rolling, forcing them sideways or causing occupants to scramble for a hand-hold or if it is crashing against the shoreline, you are creating too much wash.
- Watch out for and be considerate of small vessels such as canoes and kayaks.
- Slow down well before meeting and overtaking other boats and well before posted speed zones and narrow channels. Leave as much room as possible between you and boats you meet or overtake.
- Give special consideration while passing harvesting machines which manage vegetation growth in the navigation channel, scows maintaining aids to navigation and other vessels working in or along the canal.
- Maintain a proper look-out at all times to avoid emergency manoeuvres.

- Remember that your hull shape determines the damage you cause on the surface and below the surface. **All hulls can cause damage.** It is your responsibility to be aware of your boat's characteristics so we can all enjoy the Rideau.

Note: This list is not all inclusive. You should also be familiar with publications such as *Boating Safely* and *Historic Canal Regulations*.

## IMPORTANT CONTACTS

**OPP:** Toll Free - 1-888-310-1122  
Cell Phone \*677

**Ottawa Police Emergency:** 911  
Non-emergency 1-613-236-1222

**Coast Guard:** Radio - VHF Channel 16  
Cell Phone - \*16; Weather - VHF Channel 21B & 83B

**Search and Rescue:** 1-800-267-7270

**Charts, Publications and Information:**

Available at many marinas and from:

Friends of the Rideau  
1 Jasper Ave.  
Smiths Falls, ON K7A 4B5  
1-613-283-5810  
www.rideaufriends.com

Parks Canada, Rideau Canal Office  
34 Beckwith St. South  
Smiths Falls ON K7A 2A8  
1-888-773-8888  
www.pc.gc.ca  
rideaucanal-info@pc.gc.ca

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QS-C180-000-EE-A6

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