

Following these simple tips will help personal watercraft users be responsible boaters and avoid common environmental mishaps.

1. Don't Over-fill and Spill!

POLLUTION

- Refuel on land to reduce and chances of spilling oil or gas into the water.
- Slow down when filling the tank, don't over-fill, catch any accidental spills with an absorbent pad, and dispose of it properly.
- Check and clean your engine well away from shorelines. Water and oil don't mix and can harm the water's delicate microorganisms as well as the animals that feed on them, potentially upsetting the entire food chain.

2. Don't Rev it Up!

TURBIDITY

- In shallow waters, boats may stir up the bottom, suspending sediments, which limit light penetration and deplete oxygen. This can affect fish and bird feeding. To avoid this effect, ride in main channels, and limit riding in shallow water.
- When it is necessary to ride in shallow water keep watercraft at an idle speed.
- In coastal areas be aware of low tide, the waters may be substantially more shallow at these times revealing sea grass beds and other delicate vegetation. Disturbance of these areas can cause erosion as well as long-lasting damage to vegetation.

VEGETATION

- Vegetation such as sea grasses are delicate nursery grounds where many of the fish in our waters originate.

- Weeds, grasses and other plant life are not good for your PWC. Ingestion of these into your craft may cause engine or pump problems, and reduce performance. Stay away!

- When possible, operate well away from shore because, typically, wildlife inhabit the vegetation along the shore's edge. The least amount of disturbance is in the marked channels or the deeper areas of a lake or river. If at all possible, stay in the main channels.

3. Respect Local Residents

NOISE

- Be aware that the noise and movements of boats may disturb bird populations. Steer clear of posted bird nesting areas.
- Many migratory birds are easily stressed and especially vulnerable during their migration period. Birds will typically fly away from disturbing noises and any unnecessary expenditure of energy can harm a feeding or resting bird.
- Bird rookeries are especially vulnerable to noise from boats, including personal watercraft. Nesting birds may fly from the nest exposing unprotected eggs and hatchlings to the sun's heat or predators.

HARASSMENT

- Do not harass wildlife by chasing or interrupting feeding, nesting, or resting. Harassment is defined as any action that may cause an animal to deviate from its normal behavior. It is illegal and can unduly stress wildlife.
- Mammals such as sea otters, sea lions, manatees, and whales can be injured from direct impact by boats traveling at high speeds. Ride at controlled speed so you can see any animals ahead of you. Avoid areas of high animal population. If you hit an animal report it to your local wildlife commission. There may be a chance to save its life.

4. No Wakes Near Shore

EROSION

- Excessive boat wakes may contribute to shoreline erosion, especially in narrow streams and inlets.
- Erosion is a concern for all shorelines including rivers, lakes, and oceans. The slow destruction of shorelines affects the habitats of plants and animals. Near the shore avoid high speeds that create wakes, and observe posted no wake zones.

5. Wash Your Watercraft

EXOTICS

- Wash your boat off after you use it to prevent the spread of exotic plants to other lakes and rivers.
- Exotics are plants and animals that are non-native to a specific area. Exotics have no natural enemies and spread easily, taking over an area to the exclusion of native species, thus decreasing important plant and animal diversity.

6. Watch Where You Stop

DOCKING / BEACHING

- When docking or beaching, look for evidence of turtles, birds, alligators, and other animals along shore.
- Avoid docking or beaching where plants such as reeds, grasses, and mangroves are located. These plants are essential to the ecosystem because they control erosion and provide a nursery ground for small animals vital to the food chain, such as crustaceans, mollusks, and small fish.



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