

JET SKIS AND OTHER INVADERS

This issue of the AQRC Newsletter expresses the concerns of many Alaskans with the invasion of our living and recreation spaces by watercraft noise. The newsletter is third in a series on threats to natural quiet in Alaska.

The first two newsletters reported on recreational snowmachine noise (winter'98) and air noise (spring'98). The newsletters are compiled by AQRC from supporter reports from around the state. Each newsletter also includes a packet of factual information on the specific noise toy. We hope this information will be a helpful resource when writing letters or attending hearings.

Our fourth newsletter will be on The Cost of Tourism in Alaska. If you have ideas or reports from your area, please contact us.

Our messages are clear. Please make them your messages as well:

- 1) Quiet is a Natural Resource and needs to be treated as such by all governing bodies.
 - 2) Some areas in Alaska have reached a population density such that multi-use trails aren't working.
 - 3) The carrying capacity of public lands for various activities needs to be determined prior to any permitting.
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NEWS FROM AROUND THE STATE

Jetskis Invade Prince William Sound

Jetskis are harassing people and wildlife in Southcentral area lakes, keeping people awake as they loudly buzz along the shores of Turnagain Arm in Anchorage--and being heard in increasingly annoying numbers in more remote waters like Prince William Sound. For example, more trips are apparently being made every year between Whittier and Valdez, and it was rumored that there were about twelve of these nerve-frazzling noisemakers in Blackstone Bay during the 1997 Fourth of July weekend.

Cliff Eames

The AQRC board meets the 2nd Thursday of every month at the Qupqugiaq Cafe near Arctic and 36th.

5:30 - 7:30 PM

The public is welcome.

907-566-3524

Note: Annual Meeting is

November 12th.

Russian Jack Chalet.

7 - 9 PM

Elections

Speaker

AQRC Cacophony Awards



Tenakee Springs

Many of the residents of Tenakee Springs are concerned about the use of jetskis and other personal watercraft in our city limits. In May, 1998 an ordinance was introduced in the City Council disallowing the use of such craft in the waters adjacent to the city limits. The ordinance failed by one vote.

A new ordinance, similar to the first, will be introduced soon. Encouraged by the recent Washington State Supreme Court decision upholding the San Juan County ban on personal watercraft, the Council seems more inclined to enact the new ordinance.

Joan McBeen

Juneau

The Juneau Empire carried an article in the July 10, 1998 edition indicating that jetskis are a problem in Gastineau Channel. The reporter said that "on a particular day they may be sharing the channel with eight cruise ships, 65 float plane takeoffs and a large variety of other fishing and recreational vessels". The speed, small size and unpredictable movements of the personal watercraft apparently are part of the problem. The Coast Guard spokesperson interviewed, thought the jet skiers were a new group and not familiar with the designated use areas. Some areas are for float plane only use. An educational program is underway. Meanwhile, our Quiet Rights supporters in Juneau report an increasing noise problem for those living near the Gastineau Channel.

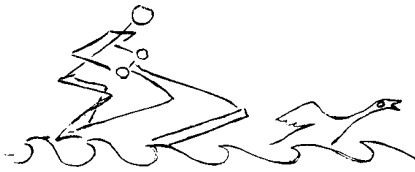
Interior Alaska

Hunting season is a time of stress for the residents of interior Alaska who live along or who try to enjoy some time along our waterways. The reason for this is the intense noise pollution created by the airboats and airplanes as they buzz about in search of wild meat. I myself, live along the Tanana River in Fairbanks, downriver from the mouth of the Chena River. About half a mile away is Chena Marina where float planes are kept. They take off and fly right over my house making no attempt to go elsewhere where there are no houses. The roar is deafening. They give no consideration for other people's space.

This in combination with the roar of the airboats is maddening. In town the city of Fairbanks has a noise ordinance that quells noise that offends one's neighbors - mainly loud music. Outside of the city limits we have no protection against this intrusion although I am sure the airboaters would protest my loud rap music in town.

Of course the hunters who are into a more traditional hunt are also very offended by the noise pollution. They cannot stalk or call a moose in the traditional fashion because of the roar. These expensive toys of the cell-phone-equipped hunters of the Tanana Flats south of Fairbanks are similar to the toys of any spoiled brat who demands his/her way with no consideration of others. As a mature society we need to take positive steps to curb this expensive abuse before it gets any further out of hand. By definition it is unnatural and therefore a stress to nature with man not apart.

Dave Lacey



Kenai Peninsula

What is it about jetskis that makes them so universally hated?

- Noise for sure. It varies in pitch and cannot be ignored like the monotonous hum of some motors. Jetski noise annoys residents, fishers, sailors, canoeists, kayakers and other water users. The noise disturbs wildlife like birds, seals, sea lions, otters.
- They're also fast and dangerous to the operators and non-users.
- Jetskis pollute. Because they use inefficient two-cycle motors, 25% of the fuel and oil mixture is unburned and spewed into the waterway.
- Jetskis disrupt the natural habits of wildlife, especially waterfowl.
- And finally, they create a major recreation conflict because the only people who enjoy jetskis are the users.

Jetski use is increasing. They are seen more frequently and earlier in the year in Resurrection Bay, Prince William Sound, and Kenai Lake. The state of Alaska banned motorized watercraft including jetskis on the lower stretch of the Kenai River, in part because of the noise jetskis create.

Recently, after much emotional public comment, the state extended restrictions to Kenai Lake, though in a compromise fashion that has left some residents dissatisfied.

The Kenai River Special Management Area (KRSMA) board took public comments last year and reported to the state Department of Natural Resources that certain restrictions on jetskis were needed to "reduce conflicts between property owners along the Kenai River corridor and recreationists to protect sensitive river bank and

upland habitat; and to implement recommendations ... of the Kenai River Comprehensive Management Plan." (DNR letter 1/23/98.)

These new restrictions:

- limit use of Kenai Lake generally to the center of the lake,
- require operators to be at least 14 years old (unless accompanied by a parent),
- prohibit speeds over 5 mph within 300 feet of shore, and
- prohibit the use of Jetskis between 10 PM and 10 AM.

It's a start. But many popular waterways remain at risk. There is fear that the Trail Lakes near Moose Pass will continue to suffer from the watervermin and Resurrection Bay will continue to see increased infestation.

In an ideal world, there would be no jetskis. That's the preferred solution for those of us who value quiet. Jetskiers have suggested that we should all share the waterways. They are willing to share the waterways in the same way smokers are willing to share an enclosed space with nonsmokers. Ultimately, those who advocate for quiet spaces will probably recognize this conclusion: it is unfair to jeopardize our natural resources and the recreational pursuits of the many (non-jetskiers) for the benefit of the few (jetskiers). Mark Luttrell

Do you want to help keep your favorite places quiet?

Join one or more of our committees this fall. Even if you live away from the Anchorage area or cannot attend meetings, your ideas are welcome by phone or email. Our Issue Committees for 1998-99 are Chugach National Forest, Legislative, Education/Media, and Tourism. Interested? Have questions? **Call 566-3524.**



Mat - Su

Alaska Lakes Management Association (ALMA)

ALMA is a non-profit corporation and a state chapter of North American Lake Management society, consisting of lake residents and or property owners or interested parties throughout the state of Alaska. ALMA's objectives are to promote the formation of lake associations and the responsible development of lake management. ALMA welcomes all who are interested in being pro active regarding lake management. ALMA meets the last Wednesday of every month at 7:00 P.M. at the Palmer Library. Call Barbara at 376-3858 for more information.

Anchorage Municipal Code

The Anchorage Municipal Code at 25.70.045 prohibits all motor vehicle use on the municipality's major lakes and waterways (except for airplanes and boats with electric motors) but permits boats on Sand Lake and Lower Fire Lake where there are limitations on motor size, wake and hours/days of operation.

AQRC Board Members

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Karen Deatherage, Cliff Eames,
Dan Elliot, Elizabeth Hatton, Richard Hensel,
Trisha Herminghaus, Tamea Isham,
Tom Meacham, Dori McDannold
Nancy Michaelson, Susan Olsen
Bill Sherwonit, Kate Worthington

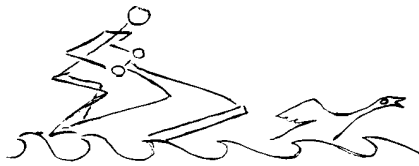
Prince William Sound: Wilderness Lands , Noisy Waters?

As the Forest Service revises its management plan for the Chugach National Forest, including Prince William Sound, one of the major goals of conservationists and muscle-powered recreationists is obtaining (non-ANILCA) Wilderness designation for appropriate areas of the forest. (Traditional uses of airplanes, powerboats and snowmachines are allowed in AK National Interest Lands Conservation Act wilderness, which is hardly compatible with traditional, common-sense concepts of wilderness.)

Wilderness designation has already been recommended by the Forest Service for some Prince William Sound lands (although since the Service recommended designating less land than was contained in Congress's original Wilderness Study Area, wilderness advocates will add the rest of the study area, and then some, to their proposal).

But PWS waters are a different matter, since the Forest Service has jurisdiction only over the uplands. All is not lost if enough people believe that accommodations can be reached between kayakers, motorized recreational boaters, commercial fishers, and other users of the Sound to provide at least some opportunities for quiet, or significantly quieter, enjoyment of these marine waters. AQRC and many others will be asking the Forest Service to work cooperatively with the State of AK, the Coast Guard, or other agencies to achieve this goal. Working cooperatively is certainly more trouble than making unilateral decisions, but it is possible, and the rewards would be substantial.

Cliff Eames



Western Alaska

Alaska Native Villages along the Kuskokwim River and its tributaries near Bethel will continue to live with the threat to their subsistence lifestyle posed by hovercraft operations. On March 20, the U.S. District Court denied the villages' request to cease U.S. Postal Service hovercraft operations on the Kuskokwim and its tributaries. In 1997 Trustees for AK filed suit against U.S.P.S. on behalf of AVCP, Akiak, Akiachak, Atmautluak, Kasigluk, Kwethluk, Napakiak, Napaskiak, and Nunapitchuk.

Over protest from each of the 8 villages, and sharp criticism from the US Fish & Wildlife Service, the Postal Service launched the hovercraft program in July, 1997. If carried out, the two-year "demonstration project" would use hovercraft to replace fixed wing aircraft for mail delivery to the 8 villages. While the Postal Service acknowledged the hovercraft was extremely loud, its own studies found the project would not have a significant impact on the environment. The villages and AVCP disagree, and argued the project violated both the Coastal Zone Management Act and NEPA. They contend the extremely loud hovercraft will disrupt valuable wildlife habitat along its route on the Kuskokwim River, that it will harm residents' subsistence lifestyle by flushing birds and killing or disturbing fish and that it threatens their traditional Yupik way of life. They are actively documenting impacts, such as birds' flight from the noise and dead fish stranded in the craft's large wake. Trustees filed a Notice of Appeal on April 28. (Excerpts from article by Bob Randel, Attorney, Trustees for Alaska.)

Juneau

Residents of Auke Lake in the Juneau area are concerned about the effect of jet skis on their quiet lives and also on the displacement of waterfowl on the lake. AQRC supporters have forwarded several Juneau Empire letters to the editor and news articles to us. One resident wrote that "these contraptions rightfully belong in the pure nuisance category. There should be enforceable ordinances that eliminate their use on small bodies of water. Auke Lake is a prime example of the serenity, peace and beauty that has been trashed by these noisy, gyrating, chopping, leaping machines. When one must close doors and windows to drown out the noise and gasoline smell, it is time to petition the assembly to address this issue that has been raised on several occasions."

Submitted by Patricia Reifenstein

Election Alert

Ask your senator and representative in Juneau, as well as the current political candidates, for quiet places. Ask if they support opportunities for quiet living and quiet recreation in Alaska.

Tell them about the areas that you want to keep quiet.

Vote!

**This issue of
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is published with the
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