Safe Boating Practices 2017

Andover Conservation Commission

In July, The Beacon published the first of a three part series, about what residents and visitors can do to help preserve our lakes, ponds, rivers, and streams. In this issue, the focus is on lake friendly boating and recreation best practices while on the water.

Q: I want to buy a new outboard motor, or replace an old one. Any advice?

Low pollution four-cycle and two-cycle direct fuel injection outboard motors reduce toxic air emissions and reduce the release of gasoline into waterways. Using these cleaner burning engines will help protect New Hampshire's air and water quality while reducing fuel costs. Though these engines may cost more upfront, they provide many economic and environmental benefits, since they: burn 35 to 50 percent less gas; use up to 50 percent less oil; reduce air emissions by 75 percent; reduce the amount of gas released into water bodies; are much quieter.

(This information, and much of what follows, comes with permission from the booklet "Help Protect New Hampshire's Lakes: A Guide to Wise Lake and Watershed Stewardship," published by the New Hampshire LAKES nonprofit organization and available on the internet at the address listed at the end of this article.)

Motorboat operation

Q: Some tips for motorboat operation, care and maintenance, please.

A few simple "rules of the road" to remember and observe:

Operate away from shallow areas. Motors can churn up sediment on lake bottoms, which leads to phosphorus being re-suspended in the water, which leads to algal growth and decreased water clarity. Motors can also fragment exotic plants, potentially causing new areas of infestation as the fragments spread to other parts of the lake. Also, wildlife may be frightened away from their homes and nests by noisy motors.

Eliminate unnecessary idling. It pollutes the air and water, and wasted fuel can be expensive.

Don't operate within 150 feet of the shore at greater than headway speed, or 6 miles per hour. Not only is it illegal, but wakes can erode the shoreline and damage wildlife habitat.

Care and maintenance

As for care and maintenance tips that impact air and water quality, another 1-2-3 set of rules to remember:

Keep your engine well-tuned, and routinely check for fuel leaks.

Avoid overfilling fuel tanks. Use a funnel or a spout with an automatic stop device to prevent overfilling the gas tank.

Avoid pumping any bilge water with an oily sheen. Use absorbent pads in the bilge area that capture or digest oil, and dispose or recycle this material properly.

Also, wash boat hulls by hand out of the water, using non-toxic and phosphorus-free detergents and cleaning products. If possible, use natural cleansers such as baking soda or lemon juice. And don't discharge rinse water into surface waters or storm drains.

Invasive species

Q: What about helping to control the spread of invasive or exotic species?

Exotic or invasive plants, species not native to New Hampshire, often proliferate more rapidly than native vegetation, allowing them to take over a waterbody. Native aquatic plants, on the other hand, are vital to a healthy lake or pond; their growth is regulated by natural controls including predators and other environmental factors. Exotic species can also be animals. The zebra mussel is an example of an exotic animal.

Other exotic plants are found in more than 70 waterbodies in the state. Exotic species infestations make recreation in and on the water dangerous and unpleasant, disrupt the ecological balance of lakes, reduce shoreline property values, and are difficult and costly to control. Exotic species also pose a threat to many native species and valuable wildlife habitats.

You can help prevent exotic species from spreading by: always checking your boat, motor, trailer,

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