

LOLA NEWSLETTER

Lake Orion Lake Association

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Water Safety

Water Safety - LOLA Addresses Boating Safety on Lake Orion with Local Officials

The Lake Orion Lake Association (LOLA) meeting held on Wednesday September 6 at the Orion Township Library addressed boating safety on Lake Orion with local law enforcement and civic leaders. Participants included representatives from the Oakland County Sheriff Marine Division including Sergeant Brain Burwell and Officer Bill Hughes, Chief Todd Stanfield of the Lake Orion Police Department, DNR Conservation Officer Chris Knights, Orion Township Supervisor Chris Barnett, Lake Orion Village Manager Darwin McClary, representatives from the Lake Orion Boat Club, and members of the LOLA Board. The purpose was to engage in open discussion regarding water and boating safety, with a focus on boater education, lake overcrowding, and the enforcement of boating laws.

Education is a key component in safe boating. Knowing and applying boater safety rules is an essential component in reducing the risk of boating accidents. Having

boaters follow the rules is the other part of the equation. Following the rules is paramount. LOLA and the Lake Orion Boat Club have sponsored boating safety classes in the past in conjunction with the Oakland County Sheriff Marine Division, and Sergeant Burwell confirmed the department's commitment to support all future Safety Class opportunities.

Communication is also an important component of educating boaters. For example, many boaters may not be aware of the Special Local Watercraft Controls for Lake Orion. In accordance with Regulation No. 63, Oakland County R 281.763.9 Lake Orion prohibited conduct; Rule 9 includes:

- It is unlawful for the operator of vessel to exceed a slow - no wake speed when within 100 ft. of any shore, dock, raft, buoyed or occupied bathing area, or vessel moored or at anchor, except when water skiers are being picked up or dropped off if that operation is otherwise conducted with due regard to the safety of persons and property and in accordance with the laws of this state.
- It is unlawful between 1 hour after sunset to 1 hour before sunrise to:
 - Operate a vessel at high speed.
 - Have in tow or otherwise assist in the propulsion of, a person on water skis, kite, or other similar contrivance.
- It is unlawful at any time to operate a vessel at a speed in excess of 40 miles per hour (64 kilometers per hour).

The team discussed potential communication channels including the LOLA website, the Lake Orion Village website, the Township's Orion Living magazine, awareness mailings to local residents, and postings at the DNR launch ramp.

Also discussed were issues regarding wake boat operation on the lake and the potential for both bottom and shoreline erosion due to their operation. In a recent study published by the Michigan DNR Fisheries Division (FR37 published July 2023), "the operation of wake boats in a manner that creates large waves and increases bottom scour is an emerging threat to natural resources in inland lakes. Wake boats can produce waves with 1.7–17 times the energy of other comparable-sized powerboats and their propellers generate enough turbulence to resuspend bottom sediments in water up to 33 feet deep. The large waves generated by wake boats take between 225–950 feet to dissipate to heights and wave energies observed 100–200 feet away from similar boats operating at cruising speed." The report made the following recommendations to reduce the negative environmental impact: 1) boats operating in wake-surfing mode or wake-boarding mode, during which boat speed, wave shapers, and/or ballast are used to increase wave height, should operate at least 500 feet from docks or the shoreline, regardless of water depth, and 2) boats operating in wake-surfing or wake-boarding modes should operate in water at least 15 feet deep. Effectively educating wake boat operators will be key to protecting the lake bottom and shoreline.

Lake overcrowding is also a concern of the lake residents. There are several contributing factors including the marinas that have been permitted by the DNR and the rental of seasonal dock space by individual lake homeowners. Chris Knights, our DNR Conservation Officer advised the group that this falls under the Water Resources Division of the DNR and provided a contact there for us. He also

reaffirmed that rental of dock space without an approved DNR marina permit is unlawful and can be reported using the RAP (Report All Poaching) Hotline (800) 292-7800 or the on-line form.

Enforcement of the boating laws on the lake was also discussed. The Oakland County Sheriff Marine Division, the DNR, and the Lake Orion Village have boats on the lake and work together to enforce boater safety on the lake. Sergeant Burwell of the OCSO made the insightful distinction between enforcement and education. There is a fine line between the two, and he assured us that where gross violations and safety issues exist, tickets are appropriate and given, but in many cases, education and providing a “learning moment” are more effective. The officers on the lake have the latitude to exercise judgement based on their experience to make that differentiation, helping maintain the balance between safety and fun. The State has recently awarded a grant providing an additional \$250,000, part of which has been allocated to additional marine patrols on our lake. There was also an additional \$150,000 made available by the county over a three-year period, some of which will also be used on Lake Orion for marine patrols. Allocating part of these funds to the use of “jump boats” as well as having an officer present at peak times at the DNR launch ramp was suggested. Both have been effective on other local lakes.

LOLA wishes to thank our local law enforcement officials, our local public officials, and the LOBC for their support and look forward to the continued cooperation in making Lake Orion as safe as possible. For more information, please visit the LOLA website at www.lolainfo.org.

Lake Orion Lake Association (LOLA)

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