

Dewey Lake Boat Density Study Summer 2007

by Joyce Schuur

The Saturday afternoon of Labor Day weekend, we cruised around the lake in the ski boat with a clipboard and binoculars taking a count. We did that as a result of a "Boat Density Study" done on Magician Lake that we thought would be interesting to replicate for Dewey Lake. So here is what we counted: 150 piers, 72 ski boats, 117 pontoons, 76 jet skis, 8 fishing boats with motors, 53 row boats, 63 paddle boats and 37 rafts. That totals 389 boats: 70% (273) are power and 30 % (116) are non-power.

We did not include the approximately 5 ski boats and 9 pontoons that reside in the channel. Nor did we take into account the boats that may be put in at the public access.

Boat density is defined as peak weekend powerboat use divided by usable water acreage. Based on studies done in Wisconsin, Minnesota, and Indiana, the recommended boat density is 20 acres per boat. For the sake of this study we estimated the size of Dewey Lake at 200 acres with 160 acres (80%) as usable boating water (eliminating shallow shorelines, the "island" and other shallow parts (i.e., in front of Irish village). Using that figure, the recommended number of power boats on the lake at any one time for optimum safety and enjoyment is 9.

The bad news is that many of us look out at the lake and don't fish because of the skiers, don't ski because of the tubers wreaking havoc with the water, and some pontooners don't go out because of the waves and the noise. (Don't know what would stop a jet skier!)

The good news is that Dewey Lake already does some things to protect the lake and its boaters. We go around the lake in a counter-clock wise direction minimizing near misses and collisions. For those folks who appreciate quiet time on the lake, the hours of no-wake boating, 7:30 P.M. to 11:00 A.M., afford them ample time.

FYI Magician Lake has 1322 boats with 1029 of them power boats. The recommended number of boats on the lake at one time based on their usable water is 20. Labor Day weekend observations estimated that 35-40 powerboats were on the lake at peak usage time. During that same time period we estimated 10-15 boats on Dewey.