



Safe Boating Advisory

Idle Speed, No Wake Areas



For decades, recreational boaters have enjoyed the waterways of New York City. The safety and enjoyment of boaters and those who depend on our waterfront is all of our responsibility.

Excessive speed can cause wakes that endanger recreational boaters, including kayakers and rowers, and can lead to damage and decay to waterfront structures such as marinas, docks, and piles. Please adhere to all wake rules and signage, and also please take every step to minimize disruption or potential danger to others.

Harlem River No Wake Zone: All boaters are advised of the passing of the Jim H. Runsdorf Law, which designates a special No Wake Zone on the Harlem River. The recreational Sharp Boathouse is located in this area. The law states that:

“Swindler Cove and that portion of the Harlem River running from the University Heights Bridge southerly to the High Bridge; and that portion of the Harlem River between the Spuyten Duyvil trestle and the Broadway Bridge are hereby designated “No Wake Areas.” All vessels operating within the no wake area shall be operated at idle speed. “Idle speed” shall mean the lowest speed at which a vessel can operate, maintain safe steerage, and minimize the production of a wake that could unreasonably interfere with or endanger other persons, property, or water-borne vessels.”

Please keep an eye out for regulatory markers that are posted in these areas.
Exceeding idle speed in these areas is a crime!

State Navigation Law: Along with the rules for the Harlem River, you should be aware of other boating safety regulations. There are specific safety regulations for Orchard Beach Lagoon in the Bronx and Great Kills Harbor in Staten Island. In addition, state navigation law (section 45) forbids operating a vessel “at a speed greater than is reasonable and prudent under the conditions and having regard to the actual and potential hazards then existing”. Specifically, no vessel, other than a tending vessel or if involved in water skiing, may operate “within one hundred feet of the shore, a dock, pier, raft, float or an anchored or moored vessel at a speed exceeding five miles per hour”. Even vessels further out may be required to operate at slower speeds, no wake or minimal wake, and should take every precaution to minimize unnecessary vessel wakes. “Slow Down: Minimum Wake” means you must operate fully off plane and completely settled in water.

Anyone who operates a vessel recklessly, including a personal watercraft or jet ski, thereby endangering the safety of persons or property may be cited for reckless operation, a misdemeanor. You should be mindful of the amount of wake that you are leaving when operating close to shore. Control your speed, obey speed limit signs, and always operate cautiously.

If you see a boat violating the no wake laws, please report it to 311. Try to provide as much detail as possible including any vessel identifying hull numbers, the vessel color, type, location, and time of day.

Please check out the Boating & Marinas Section of City of New York Parks & Recreation’s internet site, www.nyc.gov/parks. Here you can find the complete text of the No Wake laws in the New York City area, boating safety information, a list of Parks marinas and launch sites, and more.