

FoTTSA Boating and Swimming Safety Survey: Concerns and Consensus

by LYNNE ARCHIBALD, NOTTAWAGA BEACH



Photo source: Chanh Nguyen on Pixabay

A FoTTSA boating and swimming safety survey conducted online this past February generated a striking 28% response rate, confirming that unsafe use of watercraft close to shore is an important issue for Tiny Township residents.

The survey was prompted in part by growing concerns about watercraft used at high speeds close to beaches. Andrew Chomentowski, a Cawaja beach cottager and board member of the Cawaja Propertyowners Association and FoTTSA, says he sees jet skis operating at high speeds and performing spin-outs close to shore "on a regular basis" in the summer. As a personal watercraft owner, he understands the impulse, but he's also seen many near

misses between jet skis and swimmers. "Our cottage sits high up, so we have an excellent vantage point."

It's probable most of these watercraft operators don't know Tiny has a 10 km/h speed limit within 300 meters of shore from Concessions 1 through 16 (except when leaving from and returning to shore perpendicular to the shoreline). This speed limit is an exception in the province because of our shallow water, and there are no signs on the shoreline or in the water to inform personal watercraft operators.

The township applied for and was granted the speed restrictions in 2003 after several years of extensive consultation with residents, special interest groups and provincial and federal government representatives. As a condition, Transport Canada required the installation of signs (marker buoys) to identify the speed restriction area. This was not done.

The Ontario Provincial Police (OPP), which is responsible for enforcing speed limits, says policing is impossible because the 300-metre speed zone is not marked. One solution would be to install buoys, as Thunder Beach has done on its own. However, that comes at a cost.

In 2018, Transport Canada wrote to the township about the lack of signage. The issue was deferred to the 2019 budget deliberations. Due to the investment required, a staff report presented to Tiny Council last year suggested eliminating the 300-metre speed zone and returning to the provincial standard of 10 km/h limit within 30 metres of shore.

This is what prompted FoTTSA to conduct the survey now. FoTTSA has presented the results to Tiny Council and shared them with the Tiny Township Police Services Commission and the OPP. Township staff are now preparing another report based on consultation with various organizations, including the OPP.

What you told us... Here's a sampling of respondents' answers to questions

Did you know about the 10 km/h speed limit within 300 m of the shoreline?

69% No 31% Yes

Does your beach have signage about these limits?

86% No 13% Yes 1% I don't know

How concerned are you about safety hazards posed by watercraft within the 300 m limit?

38% Very concerned 29% Somewhat concerned 22% A little concerned 11% Not at all concerned

How useful would beach signage be in raising awareness of the speed restrictions and offshore limit?

40% Very useful 35% Somewhat useful 14% Not so useful 11% Not at all useful

It has been suggested that buoys be installed each year so that boaters, swimmers and the OPP can easily see the 300 m limit. This would come out of Tiny's budget. How satisfied would you be if Tiny Township proceeded with this suggestion?

54% Satisfied 25% Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied 21% Dissatisfied

While many opinions were expressed in a comments section, several action points had strong, wide-ranging support:

- installing speed limit signage at Jackson Park, public beach access points, marinas and watercraft rental locations
- a much more visible OPP presence on the water during the summer
- a public awareness/education campaign using existing township resources (website, social media, regular mailings) and local media
- installing buoys at key points in front of public beaches, especially those with significant watercraft activity

How FoTTSA conducted the survey

The anonymous online survey was emailed on February 1 to 1165 Tiny subscribers to our e-newsletter, *FoTTSA Flash*. A web link was also made available. We received 376 responses by February 10. Of these, 182 respondents included written comments, which are available on our website along with responses to two more questions, www.tinycottager.com. Watch for more coverage in *The Tiny Cottager* and *FoTTSA Flash*, and on our website: www.tinycottager.org/?p=3668.



Photo: Ken McDonald

Come on your own or bring friends and family to two environmental activities in Tiny Marsh, Ontario's first provincially owned and managed wildlife area. It comprises 600 hectares of marsh and 300 hectares of field and forest.

Tiny Marsh BioBlitz, Saturday, June 22

Experience Tiny Marsh's amazing biodiversity during a bioblitz on Saturday June 22, when participants will search for species throughout the day.

This popular free family-friendly event is a great way to learn about the wide variety of species found within Tiny Marsh. Several scheduled walks include a favourite for kids, where they can get up close and personal with insects, butterflies and pond dipping. All walks are led by experienced guides and naturalists who will entertain and enhance your knowledge of the natural world.

Regardless of your knowledge, this event is a great way for people to explore what Tiny Marsh has to offer. Come

Two Upcoming Family-friendly Bio-Activities at Tiny Marsh

by ANNE McARTHUR

for just one outing or spend the day taking in any of the planned walks.

Visit www.tinymarshbioblitz.eventbrite.ca to register and for the full list of scheduled walks. This is a rain or shine event, so dress for the weather and wear comfortable footwear. Bring any water or food you may want for the day.

Tiny Marsh, recognized as an Important Bird Area (IBA), is located at 500 Tiny-Flos Townline.

Garlic Mustard pull

One of the greatest joys has been to clear an area that was once infested with Garlic Mustard and enrich the area's biodiversity by planting a variety of native plants. Two years ago, 1500 native plants, including New England Aster, Oswego Tea, Joe-Pye Weed, Black-eyed Susan and others, were planted and we are now reaping the rewards.

Over 10 years ago, this area was covered with the highly invasive Garlic Mustard. Now the area is a glorious pollinator garden. However, there is more to be done. Garlic Mustard still surrounds this garden and threatens to make a return into the cleared area. Volunteers are still needed to help keep this area clear of Garlic Mustard.

If you have a couple of hours any time in May to help out, contact Anne McArthur at aemcarth@rogers.com

Find out more about Tiny Marsh at www.mtmconservation.org/index.php/tiny-marsh



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