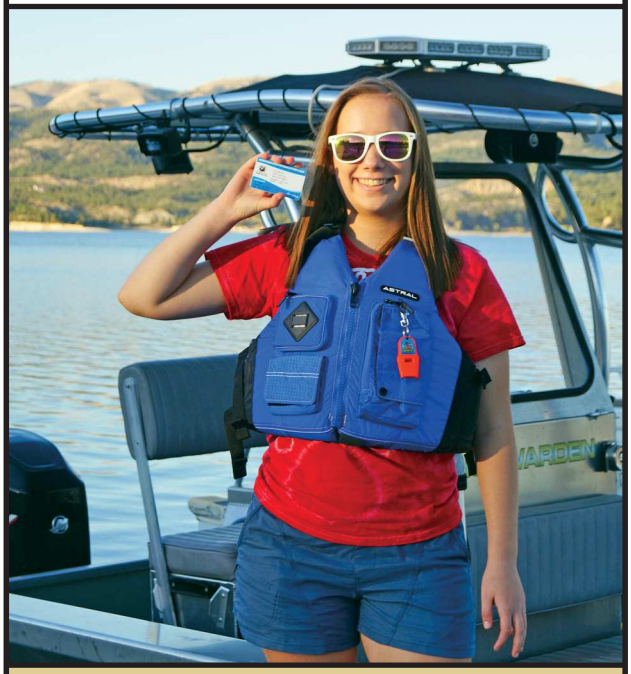
2018

MONTANA BOATING LAWS



A summary of Montana boating laws and regulations, plus safety and environmental tips.

WEAR IT
A program of the National Safe Boating Council
MONTANA

MONTANA FISH, WILDLIFE & PARKS

For a complete copy of the laws and rules, contact Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks.

fwp.mt.gov

Is your boat correctly identified?

Montana requires two decals to identify your boat:

Permanent decal

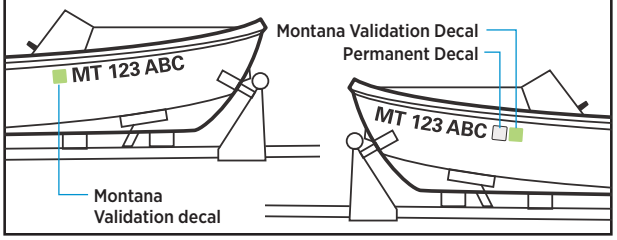
- Pay a one-time fee to your County Treasurer.
- Decal is valid for as long as you own your boat.
- Display on the left (port) bow behind the boat's identification numbers.

Validation decal

- Validation decals are free. Green decals are valid March 1, 2017 through February 28, 2020
- New boat owners can obtain validation decals from their County Treasurer when registering their boat.
- Current boat owners can obtain this decal from any Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks office, or on-line at: **fwp.mt.gov/recreation/permits/boats.html**

Information from your Boat Registration and Payment Receipt are needed in order to get your decal.

You will receive two validation decals: Display one validation decal on each side of your boat's bow, aft of the identification numbers.



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RULES FOR OPERATING A BOAT IN MONTANA

Operator Age Limit — Motorboats & Personal Watercraft (PWC)

Children 12 years old or younger may not operate a motorboat or a personal watercraft (PWC) powered by a motor rated at more than 10 horsepower unless accompanied by someone 18 years of age or older.
Youths 13 and 14 years of age may not operate those vessels without possessing a valid Montana motorboat operator's safety certificate or evidence of completing an approved boating safety course, or unless accompanied by someone 18 years of age or older.

Motorboat Certificates

The Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks boat safety education program offers a home-study course or internet courses for motorboat and PWC operators. Persons 13 years of age or older who successfully complete the course will receive a motorboat operator's certificate. To obtain a motorboat home-study course packet contact your regional Fish, Wildlife & Parks office or call the state headquarters at 406-444-2535. To view the internet courses visit the **htpp://fwp.mt.gov** website and look under "Education."

Rented Boats and Watercraft

A person must be 18 years or older to rent a motorboat or a PWC powered by a motor rated at more than 10 horsepower. All required equipment, as described in this booklet, and a copy of the rental agreement must be on board rented vessels.

Water Skiing and Using Other Towed Devices

- Anyone towed by a boat (including wake boards) must wear a U.S. Coast Guard approved life jacket.
- Water skiing and other towed recreation is not allowed between sunset and sunrise.
- There must be at least two people in the towing boat: an operator and a person to observe the skier. If the operator is 12 or younger, the observer must be at least 18.
- Water skiers must not approach within 50 feet of swimmers or enter a designated swimming area.
- Be courteous, minimize repetitive passes on any one portion of shoreline, stay well away from the shoreline & docks, and keep music at reasonable level.

Personal Watercraft (PWC): Jet Ski, Wave Runner, Sea-Doo

- All operators and riders must wear a U.S. Coast Guard approved life jacket.
- If the PWC is equipped with a lanyard-type cord that shuts off the engine if the operator falls off the craft, the lanyard must be attached to the operator's wrist or life jacket.
- A "no wake" speed must be maintained when within 200 feet of a dock, swimmer, swimming raft, non-motorized boat or anchored vessel.
- Stand-up PWC and PWC towing a waterskier must travel at the minimum speed necessary to operate when leaving from or returning to a dock or shore.
- All rules regarding safe operation of a boat apply to PWC.

Swimming Areas

Designated swimming areas are marked with white and orange buoys. It is unlawful to deface, disturb, remove or relocate any authorized buoys.

Alcohol and Drug Use

It is unlawful to operate or be in actual physical control of a motorboat, PWC, sailboat, water skis, surfboard, or similar device while under the influence of alcohol or drugs.

Negligent Operation

Operating a vessel in a manner which may endanger the personal health or damage the property of any person is considered negligent operation. A boat's owner is liable for any injury or damage resulting from negligent operation.

Aquatic Invasive Species Inspection Stations

Aquatic Invasive Species (AIS) are organisms like mussels, snails, crayfish, clams, plants and pathogens that are not native to Montana. AIS cause harm to watercraft, fisheries and the environment, and can spread rapidly because there are no natural predators or competitors to keep them in check.
All motorized and non-motorized watercraft must stop at all open inspection stations. Areas subject to search include but are not limited to the exterior of the vessel, livewells, bait buckets, bilges, and trailer. Watercraft found with AIS will be decontaminated and must pass a second inspection prior to launching. Learn more at:

www.cleandraindrymt.com

Montana law prohibits:

- operating a boat in a careless manner including such things as weaving through congested traffic, passing unreasonably or unnecessarily close to another vessel, buzzing or wetting down others, and riding on the bow, gunwales or transom.
- crossing or jumping the wake of another boat within 100 yards of the vessel or within 100 yards of a water skier being towed by the vessel (except when directly entering or leaving a marina or other watercraft docking/loading area).
- traveling at a speed which does not permit bringing the boat to a stop within the assured clear distance ahead.
- a reckless approach to, departure from, or passage by a dock, ramp, diving board or float .

Observe all "no wake" and speed-limit signs located on the water. Boaters are responsible for any damage caused by their wake. Check with a local game warden or the Fish, Wildlife and Parks office for additional speed and use restrictions that may apply.

Harassment of Wildlife

Powerboats, PWC, and sailboats may not be used to kill, capture, take, pursue, concentrate, drive or stir up any upland game birds, game or fur-bearing animals. Motor-driven vehicles may not be used to drive, molest, flush or harass any game animal or game bird while hunting.

Launching and Mooring

Boats must be launched from established launching areas if provided. Boat owners should prepare their vessel for launching before parking at the boat ramp, should launch the vessel quickly, and move the tow vehicle so that others may use the area.

Boats may not be left unattended while moored or attached to a public boat dock. Docks are to be used only for loading and unloading unless otherwise posted.

Discharge of Waste

It is illegal to discharge any garbage, refuse, waste or sewage into or near the water. Boats equipped with toilets or porta-potties must dispose of waste properly. Because there are so few marine pumpout stations in Montana, boaters should check on the local availability of waste disposal stations before using their on-board facilities. A listing of the RV dump sites is available at the **http://stateparks.mt.gov/camping** website.

Loading Passengers and Gear

- Do not load a boat with passengers or cargo beyond its safe carrying capacity, taking into consideration weather and operating conditions.
- Distribute the weight of passengers and gear evenly.
- Keep gear low and centered.
- Do not stand or make quick, unbalanced movements in small boats.

Motor Size

It is illegal as well as unsafe to overpower a boat. The U.S. Coast Guard Capacity Plate on each boat provides the recommended horse power for that vessel.

Noise Limitations

Motorboats and PWC may not emit noise in excess of 86 decibels measured at a distance of 50 feet. At idle speed, exhaust noise may not be in excess of 90 decibels measured one meter from the muffler.

More restrictive noise standards are in effect for Flathead Lake (Flathead and Lake Counties), Echo Lake (Flathead County) and Swan Lake (Lake County) because of population density and heavy recreational use. On these waterways, a person may not operate a motorboat or PWC in proximity to the shoreline if the noise emitted is greater than 75 decibels measured at shoreline in accordance with the shoreline sound level measurement procedure. Certain exceptions are made for state-sanctioned regattas or boat races and by special permit.

Races, Regattas and Other Marine Events

Written permission from Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks is necessary to conduct a boating race, regatta or other marine event on Montana's waters. Letters of application must be sent at least 30 days prior to the scheduled event. Mail to: Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks, Boating Law Enforcement, P.O. Box 200701, Helena, MT 59620-0701.

Restricted Areas — General

(See also: Closures and Use Restrictions on page 18)

- Do not anchor in a position that obstructs a passageway ordinarily used by other vessels.
- Do not operate or beach your motorboat within a designated swimming area or within 20 feet of the exterior boundary of a swimming area marked by white and orange buoys.
- Do not operate a boat within 75 feet of a person engaged in fishing or hunting waterfowl unless it is unavoidable. If unavoidable travel at no wake speed or at the minimum speed necessary to maintain upstream progress.
- Do not operate a motorboat within 200 feet of a tow-float or buoy displaying a red flag with a white slash indicating a "diver down" except by use of sail or oar. In an emergency or if there is insufficient water on either side to avoid passing through the 200-foot safety zone, do not exceed the "no wake" speed. (Note: the burden of proof of the necessity of passing through the safety zone is on the boat operator.) *See Diver Down Flag Warning on page 7.*
- Do not operate your motorboat within 50 feet of a swimmer in the water except for boats towing water skiers.

Local and Federal Regulations

In addition to state boating laws, local government and federal agency regulations may apply to boating activities in some areas. Contact the county sheriff's office or the federal agency for the area where you will be boating to find out if any additional regulations are in effect.

Accidents, Collisions and Casualties

Boating accident reports are required by law and provide valuable information for use in the prevention of future boating accidents. An accident must be reported immediately to the local sheriff's office or game warden if it caused:

- the death or disappearance of any person
- an injury requiring medical treatment beyond first-aid
- property damage in excess of $100

The operator of a boat involved in a collision, accident or other casualty must:

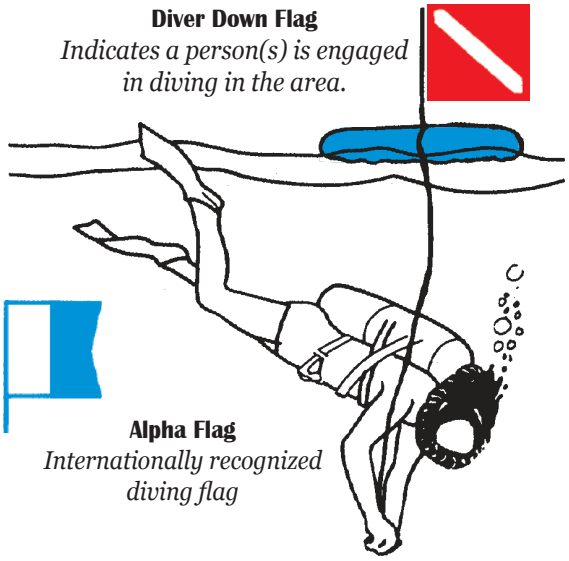
- render practical assistance, without putting self or others in danger, to persons affected by the accident.
- give his or her name, address and identification of the boat in writing to any person injured and to the owner of any damaged property.

Boating accident report forms are available from game wardens or any Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks office.

Diver Down Flag Warning

Boaters must stay at least 200 feet away from a "diver down" flag. If a boat must approach this warning flag, it must do so at a "no wake" speed. The commonly used diver down warning flags are:

1) the blue and white International Code Flag "A" (alpha)
2) a red flag with a diagonal white stripe



Enforcement

Authorized officers of Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks (FWP) have peace officer status for enforcement of the boating regulations. Sheriffs, peace officers, and U.S. Coast Guard law enforcement officers also have authority to enforce these provisions. FWP wardens are authorized to stop, halt or inspect vessels in order to enforce the laws of this state.

Penalties

A person convicted of violating Montana's boating laws or regulations may be fined up to $500 and sentenced for up to six months in jail.

REQUIRED EQUIPMENT

Montana and federal laws require that basic safety items be on board all boats and stand-up paddle boards (SUP).

Flotation Devices

- U.S. Coast Guard approved Personal Flotation Devices (PFDs) or life jackets must fit the intended wearer, be readily accessible, and be in good condition.
- Children under 12 years of age must wear a life jacket on a boat less than 26 feet in length that is in motion.
- There must be a wearable life jacket (Type I, II, or III) for each person on vessels less than 16 feet long (including canoes and kayaks of any length). A Type IV throwable device may not be substituted for wearable life jackets.
- Vessels 16 feet and longer must have one Type I, II or III life jacket for each person on board. In addition, one U.S. Coast Guard-approved Type IV throwable device must be on board and be immediately available for use.
- A Type V life jacket may be used in place of any life jacket if specifically approved by the U.S. Coast Guard for the activity in which the wearer is engaged. The Type V life jacket must be worn at all times to be acceptable.
- Sailboard operators (wind-surfers) under 15 years of age must wear a life jacket at all times. If two or more persons are occupying a sailboard, each person must wear a life jacket.
- Anyone towed by a boat must wear a life jacket.
- All persons operating or riding on a PWC must wear a life jacket.

Life Jackets and Type IV Throwable Device

Type I: Wearable Off-shore Life Jacket

Best for open, rough or remote waters where rescue may not be immediate. Designed to turn an unconscious person face-up.

Type II: Wearable Near Shore Life Vest

Good for calm water where fast rescue is likely. A good choice for children when equipped with a strap to buckle between their legs.

Type III: Wearable Floatation Aid

Generally the most comfortable to wear for water sports. Available in many colors and styles including vests and float coats. Will not turn an unconscious person face-up.

Type IV: A Throwable Device — Not Wearable

Includes boat cushions, ring buoys and horseshoe buoys. Designed to be thrown to a person in the water and grasped to the chest, not worn.

Type V: A Special Use Device

Intended for specific activities. May be used instead of another PFD only if used according to conditions printed on the label. Includes deck suits, pullover vests, work vests and some hybride life jackets. Not intended for children under age 16.

Fire Extinguishers

A fire extinguisher is classified by the type of fire it is meant to extinguish and its size. Extinguishers approved for motorboats are hand-portable of either B-I or B-II classification. A type B extinguisher is intended for flammable liquids such as gasoline, oil and grease fires.

All motorboats must carry on board a U.S. Coast Guard approved fire extinguisher as listed below:

Fire Extinguisher Requirements

Boat Length	Without fixed extinguishing system in machinery space	With fixed extinguishing system in machinery space
Less than 26 feet*	1 B-I	None
26 feet to less than 40 feet	2 B-I or 1 B-II	1 B-I
40 feet to 65 feet	3 B-I or 1 B-II and 1 B-I	2 B-I or 1 B-II

* Exception: motorboats less than 26 feet long that are propelled by an outboard motor and are completely open construction (no closed spaces where gasoline fumes may be trapped) are not required to have a fire extinguisher.

Backfire Flame Arresters

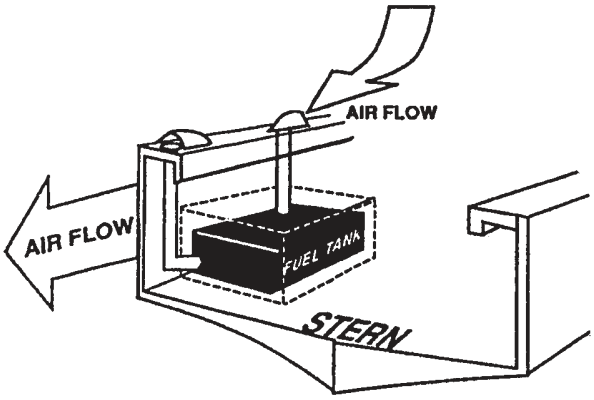
Every inboard gasoline engine must be equipped with a backfire flame arrester that is securely attached to the carburetor and in proper working order.

Ventilation

All boats of closed construction (the engine or fuel compartments are not open to the atmosphere) and which use gasoline as fuel must be equipped with a ventilation system to remove explosive vapors from the bilges of engine and fuel tank compartments. The explosive vapors are heavier than air and accumulate in the bottom of the boat without proper venting, creating an extremely hazardous condition.

Montana requires at least two ventilation intake ducts fitted with cowls or their equivalent to vent bilges and fuel tank compartments. At least one intake duct must be installed so that it extends to the point at least midway to the bilge, or at least below the level of the carburetor air intake. At least one exhaust duct must be installed so as to extend to the lower portion of the bilge. The duct should not be located so that a normal accumulation of bilge water would obstruct it.

Remember to adequately ventilate your boat before starting it by running your blower for at least 4 minutes — especially after fueling.



Whistles, Horns and Bells

- Sirens may not be used or installed except on authorized emergency vessels.
- A motorboat 16 to 26 feet long must carry some means of producing an efficient sound signal that is audible for one-half mile, such as a whistle or a horn.
- A motorboat more than 26 feet long must have on board a bell and a whistle or horn capable of making a sound that is audible for one mile.
- It is advised that all vessels carry a whistle or horn or some other sound signaling device to signal your intentions and signal your position during periods of reduced visibility.

Maneuvering and warning signals:

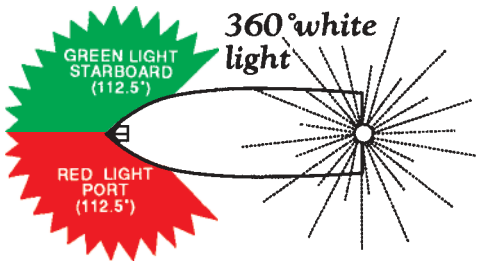
One Long Blast:	warning signal (coming out of a slip)
One Short Blast:	I will pass you on my port (left) side
Two Short Blasts:	I will pass you on my starboard (right) side
Three Short Blasts:	I am in reverse
Five or More Blasts:	danger signal

Navigational Lights

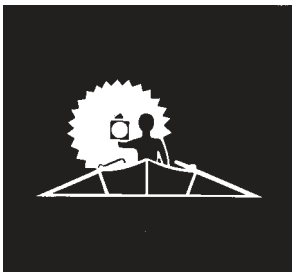
Between sunset and sunrise and at other times of restricted visibility, vessels in operation must display navigational lights. All white lights required by the rules must be visible from a distance of at least two miles. All colored lights must be visible for a distance of at least one mile.

Navigation lights include:

- a green light on the starboard (right) side of the boat
- a red light on the port (left) side of the boat
- a white light that is visible in all directions (usually located on the stern and higher than the red and green lights)

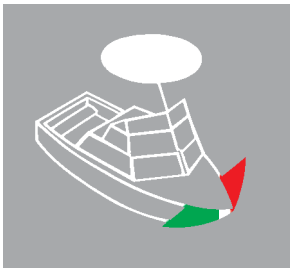


Manually propelled (non-motorized) boats may exhibit navigation lights or instead carry a white light which can be exhibited in time to prevent a collision.
Boats at anchor outside of a designated mooring area must display an all-around white anchor light between sunset and sunrise.



Manually propelled boat

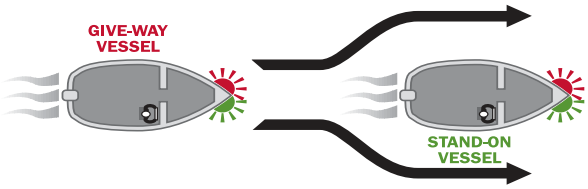
Motorized Boat



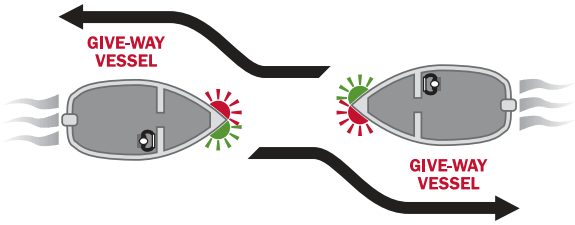
RULES OF THE ROAD

These rules of the road are the traffic laws of Montana's waterways. Like other traffic laws, they are legally binding on vessel operators. The rules dictate who has the right of way when vessels meet in open water and in crowded anchorages.

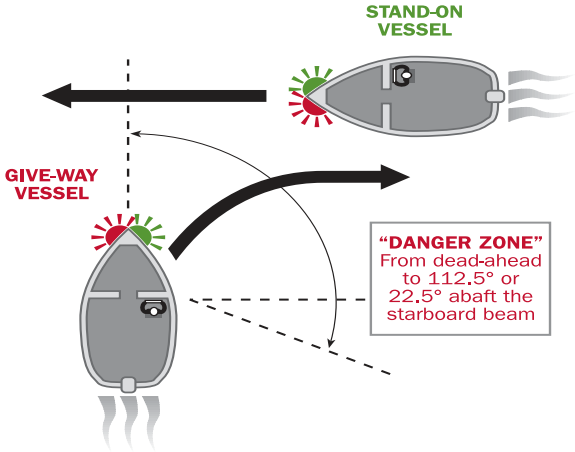
- Sailboats and manually powered vessels have the right of way over motorized boats in nearly all situations. Motorboats generally should stay clear of sailboats and manually powered vessels and not create a wake which may cause them trouble or to be swamped.
- When overtaking another vessel, the boat being overtaken (stand-on vessel) has the right of way and must hold course and speed. The passing boat (give-way vessel) is required to stay clear.
- When meeting head on, keep to the right. Boats going downstream have the right of way over boats going upstream.



- When two boats are meeting at right angles, the boat on the right (stand-on vessel) has the right of way. The give-way vessel on the left must slow



down and permit the stand-on vessel to pass.
- Always operate a vessel at a safe speed so that you are able to stop within the assured visible distance ahead or take proper and effective



action to avoid collision.
- Refer to Rules for Operating a Boat in Montana beginning on page 2.

NUMBERING, REGISTRATION, & VALIDATION DECALS

Boat Registration and Exemptions

Sailboats 12 feet long and longer and all motorboats and PWC must be registered and numbered. Non-motorized sailboats less than 12 feet long and manually propelled boats, regardless of length, are exempt from registration and taxation.

Also exempt are a vessel's lifeboat, government-owned boats, and properly registered boats from out of state or country which will not be in Montana for more than 90 consecutive days.

Out-of-state boats that are within Montana for more than 90 consecutive days must be registered at the County Treasurer's office in the county where the boat will be principally used.

Measuring Boat Length

To determine the length of a boat, measure the distance down the centerline from the foremost part to the aftermost part of the boat. Do not include bowsprits, rudders, outboard motors, brackets, or similar fittings in the measurement.

How to Register a Boat

In Montana, boat owners must obtain a certificate of ownership (title) and certificate of number (registration) and pay all fees to the County Treasurer in the county where the owner resides. The certificate of number must be carried on board the boat and be available for inspection whenever the boat is in operation. Owners of a titled motorboat must notify the county treasurer within a reasonable amount of time when the owners address changes and provide the county treasurer with the new address.

Failure to pay the fee in lieu of tax is a misdemeanor punishable by a fine equal to four times the applicable fee.

Permanent Registration Decal

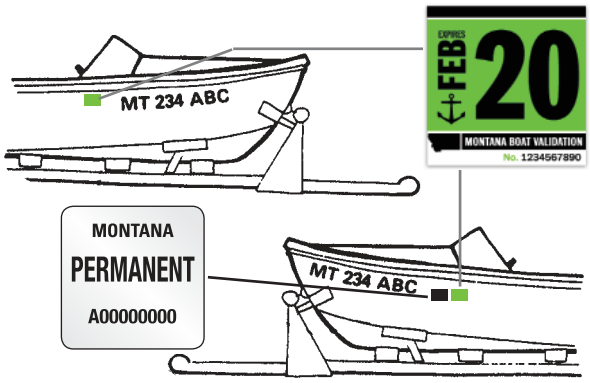
The boat owner will receive one permanent registration decal as proof of payment of fees in lieu of tax. The permanent decal is white in color and is valid until the current owner sells the vessel.

Validation Decals

All motorboats, sailboats or PWC that are registered must display two validation decals. Validation decals are green in color and are in effect for a 3-year period expiring February 28, 2020.

Validation decals may be obtained, free of charge, at any Fish, Wildlife and Parks regional office or at the **htpp://fwp.mt.gov** website.

Correct Display of Numbers and Decals



Display of Number and Decals

The boat's registration number must:

1. be painted on or attached to each outboard side of the bow (forward half) of the vessel;
2. read from left to right
3 be vertical block letters at least 3 inches in height;
4. be a color contrasting with the background color of the boat;
5. be as high above the water line as practical and still be visible;
6. be maintained in a legible condition;
7. contain a space or hyphen separating the "MT" from the number/letter suffix.
   Example: **MT 234 ABC or MT-234-ABC**
   - No other numbers or letters may be displayed on the bow of the boat.
   - Boat owners receive one permanent *registration decal* (white) that must be securely attached to the left or port side of the vessel. The decal must be spaced three inches aft (rearward) and directly in line with the boat number displayed on the left side of the vessel.
   - Boat owners receive two *validation decals*. One decal must be attached immediately after (rearward) of the permanent registration decal on the left (port) side and one decal immediately before (rearward) of the identifying number on the right (starboard) side of the boat. Refer to the diagram above.

One-Time Registration Fees

Certificate of Ownership (title)	$10
• All motorboats, including motorized canoes, motorized rubber rafts, motorized pontoons, and personal watercraft less than 16 feet in length • Sailboats at least 12 feet in length but less than 16 feet in length	$65.50
• All motorboats, including motorized canoes, motorized rubber rafts, motorized pontoons, and personal watercraft at least 16 feet in length but less than 19 feet in length • Sailboats at least 16 feet in length but less than 19 feet in length	$125.50
• All motorboats, including motorized canoes, motorized rubber rafts, motorized pontoons, and personal watercraft 19 feet in length or longer • Sailboats 19 feet in length or longer	$295.50

Sale, Trade or Transfer of a Boat Which Must Be Registered

When ownership of a boat changes, the previous owner must sign the back of the certificate of ownership before a county treasurer, deputy county treasurer or notary public.

Within 40 days, the new owner must apply for a change of certificate of ownership (title) and registration and validation decals. If the boat is operated during the 40-day application period, a temporary registration permit issued by the county treasurer must be kept on board and shown upon request.

A boat owner also must contact the county treasurer within a reasonable amount of time when there is a change of address or upon the sale, destruction, abandonment or theft of the boat.

All boats sold or manufactured in Montana must comply with all applicable equipment requirements.

AIDS TO NAVIGATION

Hazards

Individuals and non-profit organizations may identify hazards on state waterways by placing a sign or marker at the hazard. Only department approved signs, markers or buoys may be used to mark a hazard. A white plastic milk jug attached by a cord to the hazard may also be used. The sign or marker must:

- Display the name and telephone number of the individual or nonprofit organization that placed it.
- Be maintained or removed by the individual or nonprofit organization when dictated by changing water conditions or seasonal changes.
- Be placed only to signal a hazard in the waterway. They may not be used to mark swim areas, safe channels, speed limits or water skiing courses.
- Be located on state waterways. They are not allowed on navigable waters with federal jurisdiction.

Placement of Water Obstacles

No person shall place any permanent or anchored water obstacle on the waters of this state without a permit issued by Fish, Wildlife & Parks (FWP) or a federal, state, or county entity with authority. A water obstacle includes a pier, floating dock, platform, shoreline dock greater than 75 feet from shoreline, navigational aid, slalom course, jump/rail or inflatable recreational equipment located more than 75 feet from shoreline. Water obstacles that are permitted by an entity with authority are not required to obtain an additional permit from FWP. Please contact any FWP office for details on the permitting process.

NO-WAKE ZONES ON LAKES IN THE WESTERN FISHING DISTRICT

Lakes 35 Acres or Less

All watercraft operating on public lakes and reservoirs in the western fishing district that are 35 acres or less of surface water are limited to no-wake speed. These lakes have been determined 35 acres or less by means of the 1:100,000-scale hydrography layer within the department's geographic information system (GIS). The list of lakes can be found on the **htpp://fwp.mt.gov** website or call 406-444-2535.

Lakes Greater than 35 Acres

All watercraft operating on public lakes and reservoirs greater than 35 surface acres within the western fishing district are limited to no-wake speed from the shoreline to 200 feet from the shoreline.

The exceptions include:

- PWC which must maintain a minimum operating speed to remain upright and maneuver in the water may travel at that minimum operating speed following the most direct route through the no-wake zone to and from shore.
- Motorized watercraft towing a skier from or to a dock or the shore, except that watercraft must travel the most direct route through the no-wake zone.

- The following lakes located with the Thompson Chain of Lakes in Lincoln county:
  - Crystal Lake
  - Horseshoe Lake
  - Loon Lake
  - Lower Thompson Lake
  - McGregor Lake
  - Middle Thompson Lake
  - Upper lobe of Upper Thompson Lake
- Echo Lake in Flathead County is limited to no wake speed except for the following areas:(a) the upper three islands in the southwest corner of section 5, approximately 1/4 mile southeast of the entrance of Blackies Bay; (b) the narrow corridor that serves as the entrance and exit to Blackies Bay located in the northwest corner of Echo Lake; and (c) the narrow corridor that serves as the entrance and exit to Causeway Bay located in the northeast corner of Echo Lake.
- Lake Five in Flathead County

NO-WAKE ZONES NEAR COMMERCIAL MARINAS

All watercraft are limited to no wake speed surrounding commercial marinas as buoyed. The no-wake zone may not be more than 300 feet without prior approval from FWP.

> **NO WAKE SPEED** is defined as a speed whereby there is no "white" water in the track or path of the vessel or in created waves immediate to the vessel.

CLOSURES AND USE RESTRICTIONS

The following closures and public use restrictions are in effect for reasons of public health, safety or protection of property. Only authorized exceptions such as search and rescue, scientific purposes or special events with the director's prior written approval are exempt. Some waterways have multiple restrictions that apply, so be sure to check all of the following sections for the body of water you plan to use. Other dams not listed here may also be posted for restricted access.

RESTRICTIONS AT DAMS

The following dams are closed to all boating, sailing, floating and swimming or closed to all public access as marked by boat restraining systems or signs.

Name of Dam	Restriction
Black Eagle Dam	500' above dam to 100' below the waterfalls. Closed to all public access below ordinary high-water mark from the dam to 100' below the waterfalls.
Canyon Ferry Dam	The area immediately above and below the dam is closed to all watercraft as posted or marked.
Cochrane Dam	500' above the dam to 500' below the dam.
Flint Creek Dam	100' above the dam to 150' below the dam.
Hauser Dam	250' above the dam to 600' below the dam. Closed to all public access below ordinary high-water mark from the dam to 100' below the dam from December 1 to April 1.
Hebgen Dam	100' above the dam to 100' below the outlet works.
Holter Dam	150' above the dam to 900' below the dam.
Kerr Dam	The area immediately above the dam is closed to all watercraft as posted or marked.
Madison Dam	600' above the dam to 700' below the dam.
Morony Dam	500' above the dam to 500' below the dam.
Mystic Dam	100' above the dam to the dam. Closed to all public access below ordinary high-water mark from the south side of West Rosebud Creek from the powerhouse to the USGS concrete weir.
Rainbow Dam	600' above the dam to 100' below the waterfalls. Closed to all public access below ordinary high-water mark from the dam to 4,400' below the dam to the east end of the Tailrace Island adjacent to the Rainbow dam powerhouse.
Ryan Dam	500' above the dam to 100' below the waterfalls. Closed to all public access below ordinary high-water mark from the dam to the east end of Ryan Island.
Thompson Falls Dam	1,020' above the dam to 500' below the dam.
Toston Dam	Between the dam and 300' downstream and the reservoir between the dam and the boat barrier.
W. Rosebud Dam	100' above the dam to the dam.

Body of Water	County	Manually powered or electric motors only	Closed to motorboats over 10 HP	Closed to all motorboats	No-wake speed	Description & Exceptions *Visit **fwp.mt.gov** for updates and changes to these regulations
All rivers & streams in the following counties:						
Beaverhead County			X			
Broadwater County			X			Exception: Missouri River downriver from Broadwater-Gallatin county line.
Gallatin County			X			Exception: Missouri River downriver from Headwaters State Park.
Jefferson County			X			
Madison County			X			
Park County			X			Exception: Yellowstone River downriver from Highway 89 Bridge, near mouth of Shields River.
Silver Bow County			X			

Alva Lake	Missoula				X	
Alvord Lake	Lincoln				X	
Arapooish Pond	Big Horn			X		
Banana Lake	Lincoln				X	Banana Lake is in the Thompson Chain of Lakes.
Bearmouth Rest Area Pond	Granite			X		
Bearpaw Lake	Hill			X		
Beaver Creek Reservoir	Hill		X		X	
Beaver Lake (near Whitefish)	Flathead				X	5 am through 10 am and 7 pm through 11 pm each day
Beaverhead River	Beaverhead, Madison					Commericial operators must comply with the restrictions listed in the information provided with their permit.
Beavertail Pond	Missoula	X				

Body of Water	County	Manually powered or electric motors only	Closed to motorboats over 10 HP	Closed to all motorboats	No-wake speed	Description & Exceptions *Visit **fwp.mt.gov** for updates and changes to these regulations
Big Hole River	Silver Bow, Madison, Deer Lodge, Beaverhead			X		All floaters are limited to a total of 2 launches at or near each official access site each day. Commericial operators must comply with the restrictions listed in the information provided with their permit.
Bighorn River	Bighorn			X		From Afterbay Dam to the Bighorn Fishing Access Site.
Bitterroot River	Missoula, Ravalli			X		From its headwaters to the confluence with the Clark Fork River watercraft powered by 20 horsepower or less are permitted from October 1 through January 31. Floating of any kind, including the use of a tube, raft, vessel, or similar device, is prohibitied on Fridays from July 1 through September 15 from Painted Rocks Dam to Applebury Forest Service Site.

Blackfoot River & Tributaries	Lewis & Clark, Missoula, Powell			X		From their headwaters to the confluence with Clark Fork River. Watch for closure between Weigh Station FAS and the confluence of the Blackfoot and Clark Fork River due to bridge construction.
Blanchard Lake	Missoula		X			On Clearwater River
Bootjack Lake	Lincoln				X	Bootjack Lake is in the Thompson Chain of Lakes.
Bozeman Pond	Gallatin			X		
Branum Pond	Custer			X		
Brown's Lake	Powell					Closed to all boats from April 1 to July 15, that portion of lake as marked or posted.
Brush Lake	Sheridan				X	Brush Lake State Park boat ramp, dock and swimming area as buoyed.
Cad Lake	Lincoln				X	Cad Lake is in the Thompson Chain of Lakes.

Body of Water	County	Manually powered or electric motors only	Closed to motorboats over 10 HP	Closed to all motorboats	No-wake speed	Description & Exceptions *Visit **fwp.mt.gov** for updates and changes to these regulations
Canyon Ferry Reservoir	Broadwater, Lewis & Clark				X	Cave Bay, Little Hellgate, Magpie Bay and Carp Bay within 300 feet of dock or as buoyed; and from Canyon Ferry Dam to Riverside boat ramp. AIS rules restrict launching to certain sites. All watercraft must be inspected/decontaminated when coming off. Visit **www.cleandraindrymt.com** for details.
Carpenter Lake (Tetrault Lake)	Lincoln		X			
Carter Ponds (Upper & Lower)	Fergus				X	
Castle Rock Reservoir	Rosebud	X				No vessels of any type nor swimming are permitted within 100 yards of the intake structure.
Church Slough (on Flathead River)	Flathead			X		Closed to all watercraft from March 1 to April 10.
Cibid Lake	Lincoln				X	Cibid Lake is in the Thompson Chain of Lakes.
Clark Fork River & tributaries	Deer Lodge, Granite, Mineral, Missoula, Powell			X		Exceptions: (1) From Kelly Island (Spurgin Road) Fishing Access Site boat ramp and the Grass Valley Ditch Diversion to Harper's Bridge Fishing Access Site motorized watercraft, except PWC, are permitted May 1 to June 15; and motorized watercraft 20 horsepower or less are permitted October 1 through January 31. (2) From Harper's Bridge Fishing Access Site to St. John's Fishing Access Site motorized watercraft, except PWC, are permitted October 1 to June 15; and motorized watercraft 20 horsepower or less are permitted June 16 through September 30. (3) From mouth of Fish Creek to the Montana border.

Body of Water	County	Manually powered or electric motors only	Closed to motorboats over 10 HP	Closed to all motorboats	No-wake speed	Description & Exceptions *Visit **fwp.mt.gov** for updates and changes to these regulations
Clearwater Lake	Missoula	X				
Clearwater River	Missoula				X	From the outlet of Seeley Lake to the first bridge downstream from Camp Paxson swim dock. From Boy Scout Road Bridge north of Seeley Lake to the mouth of Clearwater River at the north end of Seeley Lake.
Cochrane Reservoir	Cascade					Closed to all boating, sailing, floating, swimming, personal watercraft use, and waterfowl hunting.
Colt Lake	Missoula	X				
Cooney Reservoir	Carbon				X	All of Willow Creek arm as buoyed. North Shore and Marshall Cove within 300 feet of dock, as buoyed. Boats pulling, taking off with and landing water skiers will travel in general counterclockwise direction.
Cottonwood Lake	Missoula	X				
Crystal Lake	Fergus	X				
East Gallatin Pond	Gallatin			X		
Elsina Lake	Missoula	X				
Ennis Lake	Madison			X		Kobayashi Bay swimming area as marked by buoys.
Fennon Slough (on Flathead River)	Flathead				X	
Fitzpatrick Lake	Toole			X		
Flathead Lake	Flathead				X	From Bigfork Bay to 100 yards west of Highway 35 bridge; as buoyed. Cromwell Channel at its narrowest section approximately 800 feet in length or as buoyed.
Flathead River – Church Slough	Flathead			X		Closed to all watercraft from March 1 to April 10.

Body of Water	County	Manually powered or electric motors only	Closed to motorboats over 10 HP	Closed to all motorboats	No-wake speed	Description & Exceptions *Visit **fwp.mt.gov** for updates and changes to these regulations
Flathead River – Fennon Slough	Flathead				X	
Flathead River – North Fork	Flathead		X	X		Closed to motorboats from Canadian border to Camas bridge. Closed to motorboats greater than 10 horsepower from Camas bridge to confluence of Middle Fork.
Flathead River – Middle Fork	Flathead		X	X		Closed to motorboats from Bob Marshall Wilderness boundary to Highway 2 bridge at Essex. Closed to motorboats greater than 10 horsepower from Highway 2 bridge at Essex to confluence of South Fork.
Flathead River – South Fork	Flathead		X	X		Closed to motorboats from Spotted Bear Footbridge to Bob Marshall Wilderness boundary. Closed to motorboats greater than 10 horsepower from Spotted Bear Footbridge to Hungry Horse Reservoir at full pool (3850 feet elevation).
Forest Lake	Meagher			X		
Fort Peck Dredge Cut Trout Pond	Valley				X	
Fort Peck Reservoir	Garfield, McCone, Valley				X	Rock Creek Marina & Hell Creek Marina within 300 feet of docks or as buoyed. Duck Creek Bay as marked by buoys.
Frenchtown Pond	Missoula			X		
Fresno Reservoir	Hill				X	The area around the Fresno boat club docks, public boat ramp area, swimming and beach area as buoyed and signed.
Gartside Reservoir	Richland	X				
Georgetown Lake	Deer Lodge, Granite				X	From the mouth of Stuart Mill Bay as marked by buoys and continuing to shore.
Harpers Lake	Missoula	X				

Body of Water	County	Manually powered or electric motors only	Closed to motorboats over 10 HP	Closed to all motorboats	No-wake speed	Description & Exceptions *Visit **fwp.mt.gov** for updates and changes to these regulations
Harrison Lake (Willow Creek Reservoir)	Madison				X	All of Willow Creek Arm and Norwegian Arm as buoyed 6 pm - 11 am.
Hauser Reservoir	Lewis & Clark				X	Lakeside marina and Hauser Lake State Park at Black Sandy beach within 300 feet of the docks or as buoyed. Spokane Creek Bay within 500 feet from mouth of the bay as buoyed. From Canyon Ferry Dam to Riverside boat ramp. Devil's Elbow Campground from the shore to 100 feet into the river channel or as buoyed. Clark's Bay from shore to 300 feet from shore or as buoyed. York Bridge fishing access site within 300 feet of boat ramp and dock area as buoyed. White Sandy Recreation Area within 300 feet of docks and swim area as buoyed.
Hebgen Lake	Gallatin				X	Rainbow Point Bay as buoyed; Loneshomehurst campground within 200 feet of shoreline or as buoyed.
Helena Valley Regulating Reservoir	Lewis & Clark	X				Swimming and wading are prohibited. Windsurfers wearing a wet suit or dry suit are permitted in designated area.
Henry Reservoir	Toole			X		
Hidden Lake	Missoula	X				
Holland Lake	Missoula				X	Holland Lake Lodge and the Bay Loop campground within 300 feet or as buoyed.
Holter Lake	Lewis & Clark				X	Bureau of Land Management boat landing as buoyed, Juniper Bay, Log Gulch, Departure Point, and Merriweather Camp.
Holter Lake	Lewis & Clark					No water skiing, tubing, wake surfing on Saturday, Sunday or legal holidays from the mouth of the canyon on upper Holter Lake to Gates of the Mountains near Mann Gulch, as marked.
Hyalite Reservoir	Gallatin				X	

Body of Water	County	Manually powered or electric motors only	Closed to motorboats over 10 HP	Closed to all motorboats	No-wake speed	Description & Exceptions *Visit **fwp.mt.gov** for updates and changes to these regulations
Inez Lake	Missoula					Boats pulling, taking off with and landing water skiers will travel in general counter clockwise direction.
Johnson Reservoir	Dawson	X				
Kilbrennan Lake	Lincoln				X	
Lake Alva	Missoula				X	
Lake Dinah	Missoula			X		
Lake Elmo	Yellowstone	X				
Lake Elwell (Tiber Reservoir)	Liberty, Toole					AIS rules restrict launching to certain sites. All watercraft must be inspected/decontaminated when coming off. Visit **www.cleandraindrymt.com** for details.

Lake Five	Flathead					Personal watercraft are prohibited. Boats pulling water skiers, tubers, etc must travel in a counterclockwise direction.
Lake Helena	Lewis & Clark				X	From April 1 to the opening day of waterfowl season.
Lake Koocanusa	Lincoln				X	Cripple Horse Bay within 300 feet of dock or as buoyed.
Lake Marshall	Missoula	X				
Lavon Lake	Lincoln				X	Lavon Lake is in the Thompson Chain of Lakes. To include the channel between Lavon and Crystal lakes.
Leon Lake	Lincoln				X	Leon Lake is in the Thompson Chain of Lakes.
Lilly Pad Lake	Lincoln				X	Lilly Pad Lake is in the Thompson Chain of Lakes.
Little Loon Lake	Lincoln				X	Little Loon Lake is in the Thompson Chain of Lakes.
Little McGregor Lake	Flathead				X	Little McGregor Lake is in the Thompson Chain of Lakes.
Little Rainbow Lake	Lincoln				X	Little Rainbow Lake is in the Thompson Chain of Lakes.

Body of Water	County	Manually powered or electric motors only	Closed to motorboats over 10 HP	Closed to all motorboats	No-wake speed	Description & Exceptions *Visit **fwp.mt.gov** for updates and changes to these regulations
Lost Lake	Lincoln				X	Lost Lake is in the Thompson Chain of Lakes.
Lower Carter Pond	Fergus				X	
Middle Thompson Lake	Lincoln				X	Only the channel between Middle and Lower Thompson lakes.
Missouri River (see also Canyon Ferry, Fort Peck, Hauser and Holter Reservoirs)	Gallatin, Broadwater, Lewis & Clark, Cascade			X		Closed to the use of motorized watercraft from the Burlington Northern Railway Bridge No. 119.4 at Broadwater Bay in Great Falls to Black Eagle. Vessels are limited to a controlled no wake speed, as defined in ARM 12.11.101, 200 feet from the western shore as buoyed from the Warden Bridge on 10th Avenue to the Burlington Northern Railway Bridge No. 119.4 from May 1 to September 30. Personal watercraft prohibited on the headwaters of the Missouri River downstream to its confluence with Prewett Creek, except in Missouri River reservoirs, and including all tributaries but not their reservoirs.

Missouri River	Lewis & Clark				X	No-wake speed from Hauser Dam downstream to Beaver Creek.
Missouri River	Blaine, Chouteau, Fergus, Phillips					Contact the Bureau of Land Management for seasonal boating restrictions on the “wild and scenic” portion of river from Fort Benton to James Kipp Recreation Area (Fred Robinson Bridge). Phone 877-256-3252 or 406-622-4000.
Morony Reservoir	Cascade					Closed to all boating, sailing, floating, swimming, personal watercraft use, and waterfowl hunting.
Morrell Lake	Missoula			X		
Myron Lake	Lincoln				X	Myron Lake is in the Thompson Chain of Lakes.
Park Lake	Jefferson			X		
Pelican Point Fishing Access Ponds	Cascade			X		
Placid Creek	Missoula				X	From its headwaters to the confluence with Placid Lake.

Body of Water	County	Manually powered or electric motors only	Closed to motorboats over 10 HP	Closed to all motorboats	No-wake speed	Description & Exceptions *Visit **fwp.mt.gov** for updates and changes to these regulations
Rainbow Lake	Lincoln				X	Rainbow Lake is in the Thompson Chain of Lakes.
Rainy Lake	Missoula	X				
Ryan Reservoir	Cascade					Closed to all boating, sailing, floating, swimming, personal watercraft use, and waterfowl hunting.
Salmon Lake	Missoula				X	Clearwater River from Placid Lake Road Bridge to Salmon lake; that portion known as Legendary Lodge Narrows near the south end of lake; and the area south of Salmon Cove Point (Eagle's Nest) to the lake's outlet.
Savage Lake	Lincoln				X	During the hours of 5 am - 10 am and 7 pm - 11 pm each day.
Seeley Lake	Missoula				X	Boats pulling, taking off with and landing water skiers will travel in general counterclock wise direction. No wake speed in the northern most portion of lake from where Deer Creek flows into the west side of the lake, following a straight line across the lake to where Rice Creek flows into the east side of the lake and continuing north to shore, as marked.
Silver Lake	Deer Lodge					Closed to all boating, sailing, floating, and swimming within 100 feet of the intake structure as identified by buoys or signs.
Smith River	Cascade, Meagher			X		Requires a recreational float permit.
South Sandstone Reservoir	Fallon				X	

Body of Water	County	Manually powered or electric motors only	Closed to motorboats over 10 HP	Closed to all motorboats	No-wake speed	Description & Exceptions *Visit **fwp.mt.gov** for updates and changes to these regulations
Spook Lake	Missoula	X				
Spring Meadow lake	Lewis & Clark			X		
Summit Lake	Missoula	X				
Swan Lake	Lake				X	Including northern outlet of Swan Lake approximately 3/4 of a mile south to the southern tip of the southern most island or as buoyed.
Swan River	Lake, Flathead				X	No-wake speed from the mouth of Swan Lake upstream to Porcupine Bridge approximately 4½ miles. From July 1 to September 15 no-wake speed or the minimum operating speed necessary to progress upstream from where the Swan River flows out of Swan Lake in Lake County to where Bear Creek enters the Swan River in Flathead County.
Tetrault Lake (Carpenter Lake)	Lincoln		X			
Thompson Lakes	Lincoln				X	Refer to Middle or Upper Thompson lakes for restrictions.
Tiber Reservoir (Lake Elwell)	Liberty, Toole					AIS rules restrict launching to certain sites. All watercraft must be inspected/decontaminated when coming off. Visit **www.cleandraindrymt.com** for details.

Body of Water	County	Manually powered or electric motors only	Closed to motorboats over 10 HP	Closed to all motorboats	No-wake speed	Description & Exceptions *Visit **fwp.mt.gov** for updates and changes to these regulations
Tongue River Reservoir	Big Horn				X	No-wake speed in the following areas: • from shoreline to 300 feet from shoreline from the south point that forms Corral Creek Bay (DNRC cabin site), north to the face of the dam, west along the dam face, and south along the west shore of the reservoir to the point where the Tongue River enters the reservoir. • As buoyed in the marina area at Campers Point, Campers Point Bay, Cormorant Bay, Corral Creek Bay (DNRC cabin site bay), Neck Bay, Pee Wee Point Bay, Rattlesnake Bay, and Tongue River from Wyoming border to the Tongue River Reservoir. Exceptions: (1) PWC which must maintain a certain minimum operating speed to remain upright and maneuver in the water may travel at the minimum operating speed following the most direct route through the no-wake zone to and from shore; (2) motorized watercraft towing a skier from a dock or the shore.
Topless Lake	Lincoln				X	Topless Lake is in the Thompson Chain of Lakes.
Upper Carter Pond	Fergus				X	
Upper Thompson Lake	Lincoln				X	Middle and lower lobes.
Upsata Lake	Missoula				X	
Whitefish River	Flathead				X	From its confluence with Whitefish Lake to the bridge on the JP road.
Whitefish River	Flathead	X				From its confluence at the railroad trestle south of Whitefish Lake outlet to the bridge on JP Road.
Whitetail Reservoir	Daniels				X	
Willow Creek Reservoir (Harrison Lake)	Madison				X	All of Willow Creek Arm and Norwegian Arm as buoyed 6 pm - 11 am.
Wood Lake	Lewis & Clark			X		

SAFETY TIPS

Courtesy — Because many different types of recreators may be sharing a boating area, show respect by operating at safe speeds and keeping an adequate distance from others. Due to their limited maneuverability, give sailboats and other non-motorized craft a wide berth. Remember, you are responsible for any damage your boat, or the wake from your boat, may cause.

Weather — It's unpredictable in Montana, so watch carefully for changing conditions. Be prepared to protect your passengers and yourself in case of foul weather.

Tell somebody — Make sure a friend, relative or neighbor knows of your boating plans. Leave your destination, time of departure and expected time of return, because this information may save your life in the event of an accident.

Safety equipment — The items covered in this booklet cover only the bare essentials. Additional recommended equipment which could allow you an extra margin of safety might include an extra fire extinguisher, extra life jackets, a tool kit, spare parts, a bailing bucket, an anchor and line, a flashlight, a paddle, a radio, a towline, extra fuel and oil, and a first aid kit.

Cliff and bridge diving — Look before you jump and check the water for hidden rocks, trees, etc. Make sure the water is deep enough. Always jump feet first; never dive head first.

Hypothermia — When a body loses heat faster than it can produce it, the body temperature goes below normal. That's hypothermia, and it can be deadly. Immersion in Montana's cold water (less than 70 F) will cause a body's core temperature to decrease. Symptoms can include shivering, poor coordination, and numb hands and feet. Learning how to treat hypothermia could save a life.

Dams — Currents above dams can suck boats into the water going through the dam. The currents and turbulent waters below can swamp boats and drown boaters. Even low head dams, which sometimes seem to have a very small drop, are dangerous, because the water going over the dam circulates back toward the face of the dam and can trap a person or boat.

DEFINITIONS

Aft – at, near or toward the stern; opposite of "fore".

Ahead – in the direction of the vessel's bow.

Aquatic Invasive Species (AIS) – a nonnative, aquatic species that can cause harm to the economy, environment, recreational opportunities, or human health. AIS can be plants (Eurasian watermilfoil, curly leaf pondweed) or mollusks (quagga mussels, New Zealand mud snail) or parasites/pathogens (whirling disease, IHN virus).

Bilge – the lower part of a boat's hull.

Bow – the most forward part of a vessel.

Buoy – a floating signpost for boaters.

Certificate of Number (Registration)– the certificate issued by the county treasurer to the owner of a water craft which must be registered.

Certificate of Ownership (Title) – the certificate issued by the department of justice identifying the owner of a motorboat or sailboat 12 feet in length or longer.

Certified Boater – Program for watercraft owners who primarily recreate on either Canyon Ferry Reservoir or Tiber Reservoir and allows for expedited inspections. Visit **www.cleandraindryMT.com** to learn more.

Identifying number – the boat number set forth in the Certificate of Number and properly displayed on the vessel.

Fore – towards the bow; opposite of "aft".

Motorboat – any vessel, including a canoe, kayak, rubber raft or pontoon, propelled by any machinery, motor or engine of any description, whether or not such machinery, motor or engine is the principal source of propulsion. The term includes boats temporarily equipped with detachable motors or engines.

Operate – to navigate or otherwise use a motorboat or vessel.

Operator – the person who navigates, drives or is otherwise in immediate control of a motorboat or vessel.

Personal flotation device (PFD) – a lifesaving device designed to keep your head above water; such as a life jacket, life vest, buoyant cushion, or life preserver ring.

Personal watercraft (PWC) – vessels that use a motor or engine to power a water jet pump as the primary source of propulsion and that is designed to be operated by a person sitting, standing or kneeling on the vessel.

Port – the left side of a vessel as you look forward.

Stand Up Paddle Board (SUP) – a surfboard-like device, usually thicker and longer than a standard surfboard, where the operator stands upright and propels the board using a long paddle. Unless being used within a designated swimming area, SUP are a "vessel" and are subject to the boating laws.

Registration decal – the serially numbered registration sticker, referred to as the permanent decal, issued by the county treasurer and displayed as required by law.

Starboard – the right side of a vessel as you look forward.

Stern – the rear or back of the boat.

Validation decals – the serially numbered validation stickers issued by Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks and displayed as required by law.

Vessel – every description of watercraft, other than a seaplane on the water, used or capable of being used as a means of transportation on water; NOT included in this definition are inner tubes, float tubes (belly boats), air mattresses and sailboards when used without mechanical propulsion.

Wake – path of disturbed water left behind a moving vessel; "no wake" speed means there is no "white" water in the track or path of the vessel or created in waves immediate to the vessel.

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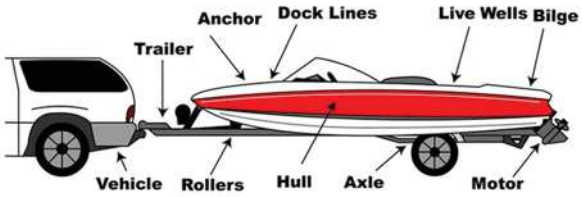
All watercraft transported in Montana must be CLEANED, DRAINED & DRIED

KEY AREAS



CLEAN. DRAIN. DRY.

Tips for a fast watercraft inspection

1. Remove water, mud & vegetation from boat, trailer & anchor.
2. Remove boat plug & drain.
3. Open & towel dry all compartments & live wells.
4. Drain ballasts & bilge, wipe bilge areas dry if possible.
5. Lower engine/motor to allow water to drain.
6. Clear through-hull fittings.
7. Be prepared to assist with the inspection.

CleanDrainDryMT.com

: Protect Our Waters Montana

: 406.444.2440

MONTANA FISH, WILDLIFE & PARKS