

2026

# MONTANA BOATING LAWS



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

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



[fwp.mt.gov](http://fwp.mt.gov)

THE **OUTSIDE** IS IN US ALL.



# WAKE RESPONSIBLY



**1** **Stay at least 200 feet away** from the shoreline, docks, or other structures.

**2** **Keep music at reasonable levels.** Sound travels well over water. If it's loud enough to hear at 80 feet back, it's likely loud enough for homeowners to hear, too.

**3** **Minimize repetitive passes** on any one portion of shoreline. Once you've run the same line for a while, move on to another area.

Learn more at **WakeResponsibly.com**

# TABLE OF CONTENTS -

## RULES FOR OPERATING A BOAT IN MONTANA

Operator Age Limit .....	2
Rented Boats and Watercraft .....	2
Water Skiing and Using Other Towed Devices .....	2
Personal Watercraft: Jet Skis, Water Bikes, Etc. ....	2
Swimming Areas .....	2
Alcohol and Drug Use .....	3
Negligent Operation .....	3
Aquatic Invasive Species .....	3
Montana Law .....	3
Harassment of Wildlife .....	3
Launching and Mooring .....	3
Discharge of Waste .....	4
Loading Passengers and Gear .....	4
Motor Size .....	4
Noise Limitations .....	4
Races, Regattas and Other Marine Events .....	4
Restricted Areas — General .....	4
Local and Federal Regulations .....	5
Accidents, Collisions and Casualties .....	5
Diver Down Flag Warning .....	5
Enforcement .....	5
Penalties .....	6

## REQUIRED EQUIPMENT

Flotation Devices (Life Jackets) .....	6
Fire Extinguishers .....	8
Backfire Flame Arresters .....	8
Ventilation .....	8
Whistles, Horns and Bells .....	9
Navigational Lights .....	9

## RULES OF THE ROAD .....

## NUMBERING, REGISTRATION & VALIDATION DECALS

Boat Registration and Exemptions .....	11
Measuring Boat Length .....	11
How To Register a Boat .....	11
Permanent Registration Decal .....	11
Validation Decals .....	12
Display of Number and Decals .....	12
One-Time Registration Fees .....	12
Sale, Trade or Transfer of a Boat .....	12

## AIDS TO NAVIGATION .....

## NO WAKE ZONES ON LAKES.....

## NO WAKE ZONES - COMMERCIAL MARINAS .....

## CLOSURES AND USE RESTRICTIONS.....

Restrictions at Dams .....	15
Boat and Motor Restrictions .....	16

## SAFETY TIPS .....

## DEFINITIONS.....

# 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 [fwp.mt.gov](http://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 (AIS):** AIS are non-native organisms like mussels, snails, crayfish, clams, fish, plants and diseases. 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. Areas subject to search include but are not limited to the exterior of the vessel, livewells, bait buckets, bilges, and trailer. All motorized and non-motorized watercraft must stop at ALL open inspection stations. All watercraft entering the state, traveling west across the continental divide, and traveling into the Flathead valley require inspections. All non-resident watercraft are required to obtain a vessel prevention pass before launching in Montana. Watercraft found with AIS will be decontaminated. Failure to stop at inspection stations could result in a fine of up to \$500. See back page for more details or visit [fwp.mt.gov/ais](http://fwp.mt.gov/ais)

**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.

### **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 or place another object 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 towfloat 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 5.**

- 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 \$2,000

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.

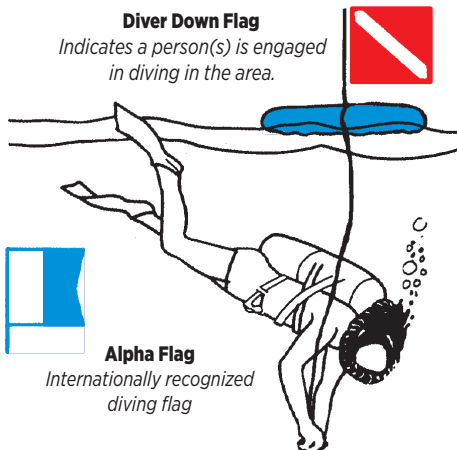
Boating accident report forms are available from game wardens or any Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks office.

### 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).

### **Life Jackets and Personal Flotation Devices**

- U.S. Coast Guard approved life jackets must fit the intended wearer, be readily accessible, and be in good serviceable 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.
- Wearable U.S. Coast Guard approved personal flotation devices must be readily accessible to all persons on the vessel.
- Vessels 16 feet and longer must have one U.S. Coast Guard-approved wearable life jacket for each person on board. All vessels 16 feet in length and over must have one U.S. Coast Guard approved throwable personal flotation device that is immediately available for use.
- A specialty/inflatable lifejacket may be used if specifically approved by the USCG for the activity in which the wearer is engaged. The inflatable life jacket must be worn at all times.
- Inflatable PFD intended for wearers less than 16 years of age must automatically inflate, must not require secondary donning, must be worn, and must include a warning statement about adult supervision.
- Personal flotation devices are required to be securely worn when operating a sailboard if: the person operating the sailboard is 14 years of age or younger; or two or more people are occupying the sailboard.

### **Life Jacket Labels**


- The traditional "Types" on life jacket labels are being replaced by a new labeling system that relies more on icons and less on wording.
- Older U.S. Coast Guard-approved life jackets and flotation aids labeled by "type" still meet regulatory requirements until no longer in good serviceable condition.
- You will not have to purchase a new life jacket because of this labeling change.
- Both labels will still show the size of the lifejacket and the U.S.Coast Guard approval number.
- Life jackets with these new labels will be accepted in the U.S. and Canada.


**New Life Jacket Labels:** Wearable life jackets will be divided into five buoyancy categories: 50, 70, 100, 150, and 275 Newtons (metric to harmonize with Canadian standards). New life jackets will have a tag attached that will explain the different types of icons and what they mean. Icons will show what activities the life jacket is intended for and if it will turn an unconscious person face up.






ADULT  
UNIVERSAL

User Weight: >40 kg (>88 lbs)  
 Chest Size: 76-132 cm (30-52 in.)

70





- Drowning hazard if not worn.
- Must be fastened and properly adjusted to float the wearer.

Choose and wear the device which fits you and your activity, visit [www.wearlifejacket.org](http://www.wearlifejacket.org). Read and keep the owner's manual and tags for info such as rearming, wear, and care.

Company Name  
Company Address  
Company website if available  
Made in XXXXX

USCG Approved 160.064/XXXXX

ANSI/CAN/UL 12402-5

Model: XXXX      Style: XXXX

Lot No. XXXX

Approval conditions state that this device must be worn to be counted as equipment required by vessels meeting Transport Canada or USCG regulations.

Lab  
Certification  
Mark

Certifying Lab  
Identification

**Use:**






- Fasten all closures and adjust for a snug fit.

**Inspection:**

- Inspect your life vest before each outing. Do not use if your life vest shows signs of weathering, damage, or rot.

**Care and Storage:**

- Dry thoroughly after each outing.
- Store in a dry, cool place out of direct sunlight.

© Boat Ed, used with permission

The new life jacket/PFD label is divided into three sections:

- **Selection and Warning:** This section includes the size of the life jacket/PFD, performance information, etc.
- **Certification and Approval:** This section includes the USCG approval number, manufacturer's information, etc.
- **Care and Maintenance:** This section includes information relating to the care and maintenance of the life jacket/PFD.

No matter if you are looking at an old label or a new one, here are three things you should focus on:

- User weight
- Chest size
- USCG approval number

## Old Life Jacket Labels

Old labels will have a Type I, II, III, IV, or V.

The life jackets intended use will be in writing.

### 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 hybrid life jackets.



## 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:

\* 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.

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

## Backfire Flame Arresters

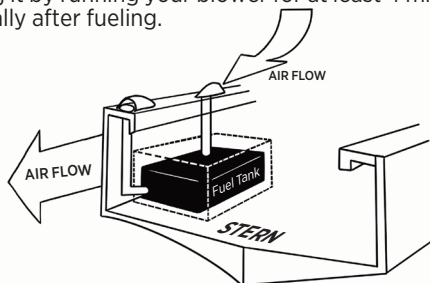
Every inboard gasoline engine must be equipped with a backfire flame arrester that is securely attached to the carburetor and in proper working order.

## 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.

### 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

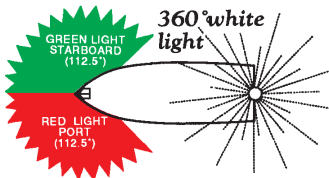
**Five or More Blasts:** Danger signal

## 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.

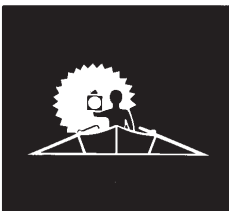
Navigation lights include:

- 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**

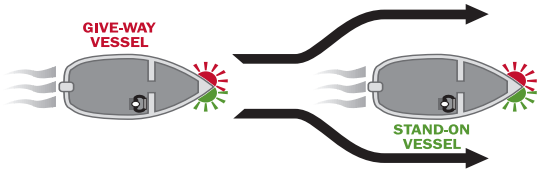
### Motorized Boat



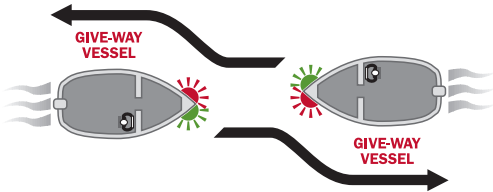
## RULES OF THE ROAD

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.

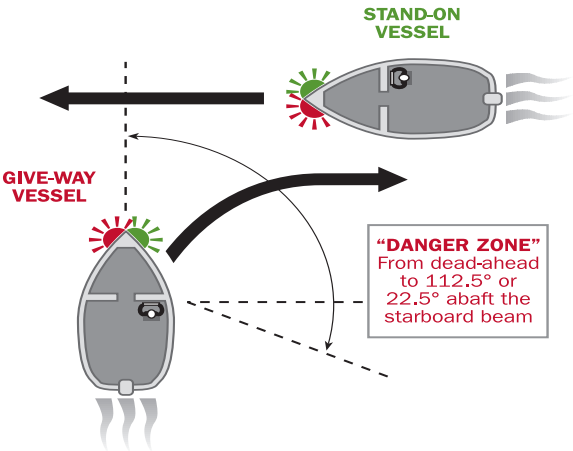
- Sailboats and manually powered vessels have the right of way over motorized boats in all situations. Motorboats generally should stay clear of sailboats and manually powered vessels and not create a wake which may cause them trouble or to be swamped.
- When overtaking another vessel, the boat being 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. Vessels going downstream have the right of way over vessels going upstream.



- When two vessels are meeting at a right angle, the vessel that has the other vessel on the starboard side shall keep out of the way and avoid crossing ahead of the other.



- 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.

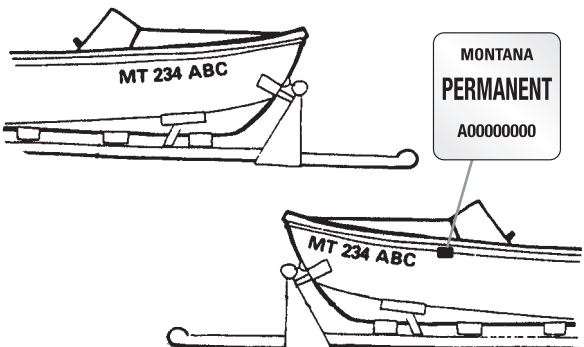
### **How to Register a Boat**

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.

## **Correct Display of Numbers and Decals**



### Validation Decals

Validation stickers are no longer required for registered boats in the state of Montana.

### 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.

### One-Time Registration Fees 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. 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.

<b>Certificate of Ownership (title)</b>	<b>\$10</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• All motorboats, including motorized canoes, motorized rubber rafts, motorized pontoons, and personal watercraft less than 16 feet in length</li><li>• Sailboats at least 12 feet in length but less than 16 feet in length</li></ul>	<b>\$65.50</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• 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</li><li>• Sailboats at least 16 feet in length but less than 19 feet in length</li></ul>	<b>\$125.50</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• All motorboats, including motorized canoes, motorized rubber rafts, motorized pontoons, and personal watercraft 19 feet in length or longer</li><li>• Sailboats 19 feet in length or longer</li></ul>	<b>\$295.50</b>

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 **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*
  - *Loon Lake*
  - *McGregor Lake*
  - *Upper lobe of Upper Thompson Lake*
  - *Horseshoe Lake*
  - *Lower Thompson Lake*
  - *Middle Thompson Lake*
- Echo Lake in Flathead County is limited to a 200 feet from shoreline 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.

<b>Name of Dam</b>	<b>Restriction</b>
<b>Black Eagle Dam</b>	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.
<b>Canyon Ferry Dam</b>	The area immediately above and below the dam is closed to all watercraft as posted or marked.
<b>Cochrane Dam</b>	500' above the dam to 500' below the dam.
<b>Flint Creek Dam</b>	100' above the dam to 150' below the dam.
<b>Hauser Dam</b>	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 Dec. 1 to April 1.
<b>Hebgen Dam</b>	100' above the dam to 100' below the outlet works.
<b>Holter Dam</b>	150' above the dam to 900' below the dam.
<b>Sèliš Ksanka Qlispè Dam (SKQ Dam)</b>	The area immediately above the dam is closed to all watercraft as posted or marked.
<b>Madison Dam</b>	600' above the dam to 700' below the dam.
<b>Morony Dam</b>	500' above the dam to 500' below the dam.
<b>Mystic Dam</b>	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.
<b>Rainbow Dam</b>	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.
<b>Ryan Dam</b>	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.
<b>Thompson Falls Dam</b>	1,020' above the dam to 500' below the dam.
<b>Toston Dam</b>	Between the dam and 300' downstream and the reservoir between the dam and the boat barrier.
<b>W. Rosebud Dam</b>	100' above the dam to the dam.

Body of Water	County	Motorboat Restrictions			No-wake speed	<b>Descriptions &amp; Exceptions</b> *Visit <a href="http://fwp.mt.gov">fwp.mt.gov</a> for updates and changes to these regulations
		Manually powered or electric motors only	Closed to motorboats over 10 HP			
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); and the Shields River, which is closed to all motorized watercraft pursuant to 12.11.633	
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						Commercial operators must comply with the restrictions listed in the information provided with their permit.
Beavertail Pond	Missoula	X					
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. Commercial 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.


**Descriptions & Exceptions**

\*Visit [fwp.mt.gov](http://fwp.mt.gov) for updates and changes to these regulations

Body of Water	County	Motorboat Restrictions				No-wake speed
		Manually powered or electric motors only	Closed to motorboats over 10 HP	Closed to all motorboats		
Bitterroot River	Missoula, Ravalli		X		From its headwaters to the confluence with the Clark Fork River water-craft powered by 20 horsepower or less are permitted from Oct. 1 through Jan. 31. Floating of any kind, including the use of a tube, raft, vessel, or similar device, is prohibited on Fridays from July 1 through Sep. 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.	
Boulder River	Sweetgrass		X		Closed to use of any motorized vessels, except any motorized vessels powered by machinery of 10 hp or less are permitted from April 1 through Sept. 30 from the confluence with the Yellowstone River to the Natural Bridge.	
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.
Bull River	Sanders		X			From its headwaters to the confluence with the Clark Fork River.
Cad Lake	Lincoln				X	Cad Lake is in the Thompson Chain of Lakes.
Canyon Ferry Reservoir	Broadwater, Lewis & Clark				X	<p><b>In Broadwater County</b> controlled no wake speed in the following areas:            Within 300 feet of docks or as buoyed at White Earth boat launch. Silos Campground, 300 feet from the shoreline between Gass Bay to Seaman's Bay, or as marked by buoys.</p> <p><b>In Lewis and Clark County</b> controlled no wake speed in the following areas: within 300 feet of docks or as buoyed, in Chinaman's Bay, Magpie Bay, and Shannon Boat Launch.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hellgate Bay, 300 feet from boat ramp along southwest shoreline, and extending north to the opposite shore;</li> <li>• Court Sheriff Bay from the mouth of the bay or as buoyed. The mouth of Court Sheriff Bay is identified as the area from the tip of the narrow peninsula that extends southeast from Canyon Ferry Village to the shore directly east.</li> <li>• Kayley Bay is limited to a controlled no wake speed, from approximately 500 yards from the mouth of the stream entering the lake and extending southwest to the point of the bay that narrows at the peninsula at Tranquility Drive on the north side of the bay, to the opposite shore southeast, or as buoyed.</li> </ul>

Body of Water	County	Motor Restrictions				Descriptions & Exceptions *Visit <a href="http://fwp.mt.gov">fwp.mt.gov</a> for updates and changes to these regulations
		Manually powered or electric motors only	Closed to motorboats over 10 HP	Closed to all motorboats	No-wake speed	
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.

<p>Clark Fork River &amp; tributaries</p>	<p>Deer Lodge, Granite, Mineral, Missoula, Powell</p>			<p>X</p>	<p>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 Oct. 1 through Jan. 31.  (2) From Harper's Bridge Fishing Access Site to St. John's Fishing Access Site motorized watercraft, except PWC, are permitted Oct. 1 to June 15; and motorized watercraft 20 horsepower or less are permitted June 16 through Sept. 30.  (3) From mouth of Fish Creek to the Montana border.</p> 
<p>Clearwater Lake</p>	<p>Missoula</p>	<p>X</p>			
<p>Clearwater River</p>	<p>Missoula</p>			<p>X</p>	<p>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.</p>
<p>Cochrane Reservoir</p>	<p>Cascade</p>				<p>Closed to all boating, sailing, floating, swimming, personal watercraft use, and waterfowl hunting.</p>
<p>Colt Lake</p>	<p>Missoula</p>	<p>X</p>			

Body of Water	County	Motor Restrictions				Descriptions & Exceptions *Visit <a href="http://fwp.mt.gov">fwp.mt.gov</a> for updates and changes to these regulations
		Manually powered or electric motors only	Closed to motorboats over 10 HP	Closed to all motorboats	No-wake speed	
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 Hwy 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.
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	

Body of Water	County	Motorboat Restrictions				Descriptions & Exceptions *Visit <a href="http://fwp.mt.gov">fwp.mt.gov</a> for updates and changes to these regulations
		Manually powered or electric motors only	Closed to motorboats over 10 HP	Closed to all motorboats	No-wake speed	
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				
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; Lonesomehurst campground within 200 feet of shoreline or as buoyed.
Helena Valley Regulating Reservoir	Lewis & Clark	X				Swimming and wading are prohibited except when launching or removing a vessel from the reservoir. Pets may not occupy the water.
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.

Body of Water	County	Motorboat Restrictions				Descriptions & Exceptions *Visit <a href="http://fwp.mt.gov">fwp.mt.gov</a> for updates and changes to these regulations
		Manually powered or electric motors only	Closed to motorboats over 10 HP	Closed to all motorboats	No-wake speed	
Hyalite Reservoir	Gallatin				X	
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 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.
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.

Body of Water	County	Descriptions & Exceptions *Visit <a href="http://fwp.mt.gov">fwp.mt.gov</a> for updates and changes to these regulations			
		Manually powered or electric motors only	Closed to motorboats over 10 HP	Closed to all motorboats	No-wake speed
Missouri River (see also Canyon Ferry, Fort Peck, Hauser and Holter Reservoirs)	Gallatin, Broadwater, Lewis & Clark, Cascade			X	In Broadwater County the Missouri River is closed to all swimming, boating, sailing and floating in the following areas: between Toston dam and 300 feet downstream of the dam; and the reservoir between the Toston dam and the boat barrier. 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 Sep. 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.
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.

**Descriptions & Exceptions**

\*Visit [fwp.mt.gov](http://fwp.mt.gov) for updates and changes to these regulations

Body of Water	County	Motorboat Restrictions				No-wake speed	Description & Exceptions
		Manually powered or electric motors only	Closed to motorboats over 10 HP	Closed to all motorboats			
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.	
Shields River	Park, Meagher			X		The Shields River and its tributaries are closed to any motorized watercraft from the headwaters of the Shields River to the confluence with the Yellowstone River.	
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	
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 Sep. 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.
Teepee Lake	Flathead				X		
Tetrault Lake (Carpenter Lake)	Lincoln			X			
Thompson Lakes	Lincoln					X	Refer to Middle or Upper Thompson lakes for restrictions.

Body of Water	County	Motorboat Restrictions				No-wake speed	Descriptions & Exceptions *Visit <a href="http://fwp.mt.gov">fwp.mt.gov</a> for updates and changes to these regulations
		Manually powered or electric motors only	Closed to motorboats over 10 HP	Closed to all motorboats	No-wake speed		
Tiber Reservoir (Lake Elwell)	Liberty, Toole					For current AIS restrictions visit <a href="http://fwp.mt.gov/ais">fwp.mt.gov/ais</a> .	
Tongue River Reservoir	Big Horn				X	<p>No-wake speed in the following areas:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>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.</li> <li>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.</li> </ul> <p>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.</p>	

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



**TIP**  **NT.MT.GOV**

**REPORT FISH AND WILDLIFE CRIMES**

## 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 (zebra or quagga mussels, New Zealand mudsnail) 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.

**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** – Validation stickers are no longer required to register your boat in the state of Montana.

**Vessel** – every description of watercraft, other than a sea-plane 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.

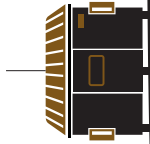
**Watercraft Inspection** - examination of motorized and non-motorized watercraft by trained staff to detect and prevent the spread of aquatic invasive species.

Under Title VI of the 1964 Civil Rights Act, Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, the Age Discrimination Act of 1975, and Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972, the U.S. Department of the Interior prohibits discrimination on the basis of race, color, national origin, age, sex, or disability. If you believe that you have been discriminated against in any program, activity, or facility, or if you need more information, please write to: Office of Diversity, Inclusion and Civil Rights, U.S. Department of the Interior, 1849 C Street, NW Washington, DC 20240.

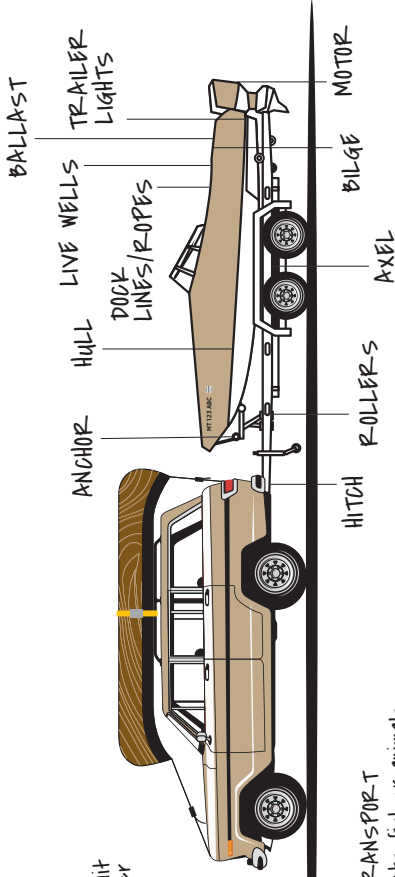
# CLEAN.DRAIN.DRY.

## CHECK THESE AREAS OF YOUR BOAT

Place unwanted bait in the trash, never in the water



NEVER TRANSPORT water, plants, fish or animals into a different body of water.



## CLEAN

Remove mud, plants and organisms from boat, trailer and gear.

## DRAIN

Eliminate water from boat and equipment.

## DRY

Allow time for boat and equipment to dry before your next trip.



# MONTANA'S AIS REGULATIONS

**STOP** at all open watercraft inspection stations as directed by signs.

When traveling from out-of-state, west across the Continental Divide or into the Flathead River Basin, watercraft must be inspected before launching. Boats with ballast tanks that are entering the state require a decontamination before launching.

**Pull the drain plug** when leaving the launch area. Drain all water and remove all aquatic vegetation.

**Retain proof of inspection** (paper or electronic)

**Failure to stop** at inspections stations could result in a fine up to \$700.

## **VESSEL AIS PREVENTION PASS** REQUIRED

Purchase pass online at [fwp.mt.gov/AIS](http://fwp.mt.gov/AIS), at any FWP office, or any FWP license provider.

**Nonmotorized watercraft fee is \$10.**

**Motorized watercraft fee is \$30.**



**For more info or  
to report AIS**

**CLEAN.DRAIN.DRY.**  
TO PROTECT MONTANA'S WATERS