

Defining Sunset

According to Washington State rules and regulations, water skiing and tubing are prohibited ½ hour after sunset until ½ hour after sunrise. “Sunset” is defined as the disappearance of the sun below the horizon. Beginning Memorial Day weekend, the sun will set at 7:56 PM. Adding the ½ hour in accordance with Washington State Boating safety laws means that skiers/tubers must be off the water at 8:26 PM. That time will become later into the evening by a minute each day until approximately June 30th, when the days begin to shorten again. For the July 4th weekend, sunset will be at 8:10 PM and adding the ½ hour rule, you must be back to shore by 8:40 PM if you are skiing/tubing or have no running lights. By Labor Day weekend, sunset will be at approximately 6:43 PM and skiing/tubing will end at 7:13 PM.

Personal Watercraft (PWC) have “NO LIGHTS” and “MUST NOT” be moving in the water beginning ½ hour after sunset. Not only are some personal watercraft out after dark, but also by doing so, they are endangering their own safety, as well as, the safety of others. If you have no running lights, please stay off of the water beginning ½ hour after sunset. ***IT’S THE LAW! Night skiing/tubing is still just as ILLEGAL and DANGEROUS even with the use of tower lights, flood lights or any other lighting device!*** It is also inviting to hit the water early in the morning in the daylight on some of those beautiful summer mornings and it is legal, but please be aware that not everyone is an early riser and/or wants to hear the sound of your PWC. A little courtesy is suggested.

Since these boats are not equipped with running lights: pedal boats, rowboats, and small aluminum boats with motors must be off the water ½ hour after sunset. Larger motorboats have running lights, NOT headlights, so please be aware that we can’t see you in the dark if you have no lights on your boat.

During hours of darkness, larger motorboats are allowed to maneuver on the lake with running lights; however I would recommend motoring with caution at a reduced rate of speed. Visibility is limited and there may be unforeseen objects floating in the lake. I have had reports of many boats sitting in the middle of the lake on the 4th of July enjoying the fireworks that have no lights. If you are on the lake in the hours of darkness you must have your running lights on so that you will be seen by other boaters.

Night skiing/ tubing ½ hour after sunset is not only dangerous, but is prohibited by law. You and other boaters cannot clearly see the skier/tuber that you are pulling, let alone see your flag should your skier/tuber fall into the water. **If you need to use your running lights, it is TOO LATE to ski/tube!** Our lake neighbors would be devastated if a careless night skier were accidentally hit and possibly killed because he could not be seen in the dark.

It is hard to resist the tempting smooth, calm, serene dark water to go out for that “one last run,” but this practice is not only illegal but clearly unsafe and must be stopped! Is it worth the price to endanger the lives of our children, grandchildren and friends by pulling them on the water after dark?

By Larita Humble, Boating Safety Committee