

threatened, endangered, or special concern animal or plant species.

#### *Shoreline Vegetation*

Under the proposed regulation, PWC operators would be allowed to travel along the shoreline wherever motorized vessels are allowed so long as they are operated at flat wake speed within 50 feet of the shore. Hidden Cave Cove, Painted Canyon, and Seminole Canyon would remain closed under the proposed rule to all vessels. Vessels would be prohibited from landing on islands during Interior Least Tern nesting activities. All vessels operating within harbors, mooring areas, and any other areas marked by buoys, are required to operate at flat wake speed only. While personal watercraft use occurs throughout the reservoir, the primary location for potential impacts would be where PWC use is most prevalent. These areas include the San Pedro arm of the reservoir (at the end of Spur 454) and the Indian Springs area in the upper Devils River arm of the lake. Other impacts include negligible short-term wave action and trampling caused by PWC operators landing their craft and walking on the shore.

Fluctuating water levels create more potential for short- and long-term erosion and impacts to shoreline vegetation than any other sources, followed by wind, other motorized boats, and personal watercraft. Fluctuating water levels greatly deter the development of hydrophytic shoreline vegetation or aquatic vegetation and largely prevent the growth of shoreline vegetation.

Allowing PWC use at Amistad National Recreation Area would have negligible adverse impacts to shoreline vegetation over the short and long term, with no perceptible changes in plant community size, integrity, or continuity. (For an explanation of terms such as “negligible” and “adverse” in regard to shorelines see page 130 of the Environmental Assessment.)

#### *Visitor Experience*

*Impacts on PWC Users.* There would be no change to PWC use or activity as compared to the conditions during 2002. Therefore, the proposed rule would have no new effects on the experiences of PWC users at Amistad National Recreation Area.

*Impacts on Other Boaters.* Other boaters to Amistad National Recreation Area would continue to interact with PWC operators. Generally, few nonmotorized craft use Lake Amistad (sea kayaks and canoes), so interactions with these user groups are infrequent. Motorboats are more likely to interact

with PWC. There are three locations with the potential for boat/PWC interactions: near the Spur 454 boat ramp, on the Devils River upstream from the Rough Canyon boat ramp, and directly in front of the Diablo East harbor. Although no accidents or conflicts have been documented in these areas, the potential exists. Based on this analysis, the proposed rule would have negligible adverse effects on the visitor experience of other boaters for the existing and future conditions. (For an explanation of terms such as “negligible” and “adverse” in regard to visitor experience see page 130 of the Environmental Assessment.)

*Impacts on Other Visitors.* Swimmers, hikers, and other visitors would have contact with PWC users. San Pedro Canyon is a popular PWC destination, and new undesignated swim beaches in this area have become very popular on weekends, with as many as 60 swimmers at one beach. On July 4, 2001 a high of 14 PWC trailers were counted at Spur 454, which serves the San Pedro area. Boat ramps at Diablo East and 277 North also serve the San Pedro Canyon. PWC use would have moderate adverse effects on swimmers in San Pedro Canyon.

Receding lake levels have led to decreased visitation to park campgrounds. Because campgrounds are currently high above the lake level, contact between campers and PWC users is low. However, lake levels could rise, camping visitation could increase, and contact between the two groups could increase. PWC use would have negligible to minor adverse effects on visitors to park campgrounds and minor adverse effects at higher water levels.

Boaters often camp along the shoreline (outside park campgrounds) and may be affected by PWC use. However, because these undesignated campsites are located along the shore, campers would be exposed to motorized boat use as well as PWC use. It is likely that these campers move on after spending the night, and since PWC use is restricted to the hours between sunrise and sunset, they would experience little contact with PWC users. PWC use would have negligible adverse effects to these campers.

The primary activities at Amistad National Recreation Area that may affect visitor experiences include the number and activities of other visitors, and noise from motorboats. No other actions are currently planned that would affect PWC use or visitor experiences within the national recreation area. According to a 2001 visitor survey, most visitors are satisfied with their experiences at the park. Cumulative impacts related to

the use of personal watercraft, motorized boats, and other visitor activities would be negligible over the short and long term because there would be little noticeable change in visitor experiences, even with projected PWC and boat use increases.

Continued PWC use at Amistad National Recreation Area would have negligible adverse impacts on experiences for most visitors in the short and long term. PWC use would have long-term, negligible, adverse impacts on shoreline campers, but long-term, minor adverse impacts on swimmers and other visitors using official park campgrounds and desiring an experience characterized predominantly by natural quiet. When related to other visitor activities, PWC use would not appreciably limit the critical characteristics of visitor experiences.

Cumulative effects of PWC use, other watercraft, and other visitors would continue to result in long-term, negligible to minor, adverse impacts, since there would be little noticeable change in visitor experiences. Most visitors would continue to be satisfied with their experiences at Amistad National Recreation Area.

#### *Visitor Conflict and Safety*

Few PWC accidents have been reported at Amistad National Recreation Area, and there have been some incident reports, most involving PWC users and swimmers or other boaters. Staff receive infrequent calls for assistance in locating a PWC operator who is overdue or “missing.” Running out of gas is also a concern and may be hazardous because of the vast size of the park. The park conducts regular boat patrols, which will help to identify potential PWC/visitor safety issues.

Divers may be present within the recreation area at submerged ranch home locations. No conflicts between PWC users and divers have been observed. Divers set buoys to identify their location, so PWC users should be able to avoid these areas and any resulting conflicts.

PWC speeds, wakes, and operations near other users can pose hazards and conflicts, especially to canoeists and sea kayakers. Currently very few nonmotorized boats are used in the national recreation area, but conflicts could occur with personal watercraft, particularly if PWC use increased as predicted. To date, few conflicts have been reported.

*PWC User/Swimmer Conflicts.* In 10 years it is estimated that an average 37 personal watercraft would be in use in the reservoir during peak use days. The