

PWC use under a special regulation that includes certain current provisions of the Superintendent's Compendium. The Superintendent's Compendium is terminology the NPS uses to describe the authority provided to the Superintendent under 36 CFR 1.5 and 1.7. It allows for local, park-specific regulations for a variety of issues and under certain criteria. Alternative A is also the baseline for proposing the impact analysis. However, the economic analysis discussed later in this document uses the no-action alternative as a baseline. The provisions of the Superintendent's Compendium include the following closures: the stilling basin below Sanford Dam, the waters of the Canadian River, and within 750' of the intake tower. The stilling basin was closed because it is a designated swim beach, while the prohibition on vessels within 750 feet of the intake tower enhances safety and prevents any accidental contamination of the municipal water system. During times of heightened homeland security the park would institute a 75 foot buffer around the Dam structure itself to all vessels. Since this is a sporadic closure, it is not included in the text of the regulatory language. Waters of the Canadian River are typically too low to safely operate a vessel. The launching of boats at areas other than at a designated launch site is also prohibited.

Under alternative B Lake Meredith National Recreation Area would adopt a special regulation that would allow continued PWC operation similar to alternative A, but use would be further restricted to reduce conflicts between fishermen and PWC operators in lake areas and to protect water resources by designating and marking "Flat Wake" zones in a number of the canyons. These lake arms and back coves include: North Turkey Creek, Bugbee Canyon, North Canyon, North Cove, South Canyon, Sexy Canyon, Amphitheater Canyon, the coves between day markers 9 and 11, Fritch Canyon, Short Creek, Evans Canyon and Canal Canyon. In addition, the special regulation would prohibit PWC fueling on the lake except at the marina fuel dock, with an attendant providing the fuel service. PWC fueling by operators would be allowed only when the PWC is out of the water. In addition, the carrying of extra fuel onboard PWC would be prohibited.

In addition to these two alternatives for allowing restricted PWC use, a no-action alternative was considered that would continue the prohibition of all PWC use within the National Recreation Area. All three alternatives were evaluated with respect to PWC impacts on water quality, air quality,

soundscapes, wildlife and wildlife habitat, threatened, endangered, or special concern species, shoreline vegetation, visitor experience, visitor conflict and safety, and cultural resources.

Based on the environmental analysis, NPS determined that Alternative B is the park's preferred alternative for managing PWC use. Alternative B is also considered the environmentally preferred alternative because it would best fulfill park responsibilities as steward of this sensitive habitat; ensure safe, healthful, productive, and aesthetically and culturally pleasing surroundings; and attain a wider range of beneficial uses of the environment without degradation, risk to health or safety, or other undesirable and unintended consequences.

This document proposes regulations to implement Alternative B at Lake Meredith National Recreation Area. The NPS will consider the comments received on this proposed rule, as well as the comments received on the Environmental Assessment. The public should review and consider the other alternatives contained in the Environmental Assessment when making comments on this proposed rule. A copy of the Environmental Assessment is available by contacting the Superintendent, Lake Meredith National Recreation Area, P.O. Box 1460, Fritch, Texas, 79036, or by downloading the document from the park's Web site at [www.nps.gov/lamr](http://www.nps.gov/lamr).

The park will begin planning efforts and public outreach for a new General Management Plan in the near future. During that planning process the environmental impacts of vessels other than PWCs will be evaluated. At that time, all vessels will be brought into alignment with regulations for PWCs and rule making proposed where needed for consistency.

The following summarizes the predominant resource protection and public use issues associated with PWC use at Lake Meredith Recreation Area. Each of these issues is analyzed in the *Lake Meredith Recreation Area, Personal Watercraft Use Environmental Assessment*.

#### *Water Quality*

Conventional two-stroke, carbureted engines today power the vast majority of PWC in use, which discharge as much as 30% of their fuel unburned directly into the water. Hydrocarbons, including benzene, toluene, ethyl benzene, and xylene (BTEX) and polyaromatic hydrocarbons (PAHs), are released. These discharges have potential adverse effects on water quality. The issue over

two stroke engines operating at Lake Meredith Recreation Area will in time become a non-issue. In 1996, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) promulgated a rule to control exhaust emissions from new marine engines, including outboards and PWC. Emission controls provide for increasingly stricter standards beginning in model year 2006 (EPA 1996a). As a result of the rule, the EPA expects a 50% reduction in hydrocarbon emissions from marine engines from present levels by 2020 and a 75% reduction in hydrocarbon emissions by 2025. Impacts from the use of two stroke engines will diminish as this new technology replaces older two stroke engines.

Under this proposed rule PWC use would continue within the reservoir, but flat wake zones would be established in 12 coves and lake arms: North Turkey Creek, Bugbee Canyon, North Canyon, South Canyon, Sexy Canyon, Amphitheater Cove, the coves between day markers 9 and 11, North Cove, Fritch Canyon, Short Creek, Evans Canyon and Canal Canyon. It is assumed that PWC operating in the flat wake zones under this proposal would discharge gasoline and its constituents at one-quarter the rate expected at full throttle in the open-water portion of the lake. For the purpose of evaluating impacts to water quality, it was assumed that the flat wake zones were established in 2002. Area 1 is defined as Lake Meredith minus the flat wake zones and area 2 is defined as the flat wake zones.

Overall numbers and distribution of PWC would remain the same in both 2002 and 2012. In 2012 emission rates for PWC (as well as outboard motorboats) were assumed to decrease by 50%, in accordance with the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency manufacturing requirement. Also, under this proposal the PWC user education program would be enhanced to include materials describing the advantages of the U.S. EPA emission reduction programs and the anticipated benefits to water and air quality.

The environmental analysis determined that impacts from continued PWC use with management restrictions would result in short- and long-term, negligible, adverse effects on water quality based on ecotoxicological and human health benchmarks, similar to the current limits (*i.e.*, use levels before the park closed on November 7, 2002). All threshold volumes needed to dilute PWC emissions in area 2 (the 12 flat wake zones) would be smaller under this proposal than under the current limits because of the additional management restrictions (specific flat