

Evans Canyon and Canal Canyon), and visitor education would be enhanced. PWC operators would be prohibited from fueling on the lake (except at the marina fuel dock) and from carrying extra fuel onboard. A map of the lake will be developed to identify these flat-wake zones and launching of vessels would be permitted at areas with designated concrete vessel ramps (Cedar Canyon Launch Ramp, Fritch Fortress Launch Ramp, Harbor Bay Launch Ramp, Blue West Launch Ramp, and Sanford-Yake Marina) and designated camping areas and primitive areas. Primitive or undeveloped launch sites may be opened or closed depending on lake levels. Maps will be posted at the park, on the park's web site, and informational pamphlets would be made available to the public.

**Impacts on PWC Users.** Flat wake restrictions established under this proposed rule would be limited only to the arms of the lake and back coves. Other flat wake restriction are imposed by 36 CFR part 3 and the Texas Water Safety Act. The State of Texas prohibits other than flat wake speeds within 50 feet of another PWC, vessel, platform, person, object or shoreline. Because PWC operators often prefer large bodies of open water, these restrictions would have a negligible adverse effect on PWC users. Fueling watercraft away from the water surface would result in a minor inconvenience.

**Impacts on Other Boaters.** Impacts to other boaters would be similar to those under the previous circumstance because restrictions under this proposed rule would not affect areas or hours of operation or the number of users permitted on the lake. However, anglers who fish from boats would experience a beneficial impact due to PWC flat wake restrictions in lake arms and coves, as would canoeists and kayakers who may prefer these areas. Impacts to other boaters would continue to be negligible to minor, long term, and adverse.

**Impacts on Other Visitors.** Impacts to other shoreline users would be similar to those under the current management. Other visitors, particularly swimmers, might notice a beneficial impact due to PWC operators refueling their watercraft out of the water and away from the shoreline. Anglers, particularly those who fish in back coves or from shorelines where such fishing is permitted, would experience beneficial impacts due to PWC speed and flat wake restrictions. Other visitors would continue to experience negligible to minor adverse impacts.

When related to other visitor activities, PWC use would not

appreciably limit the visitor experience. Cumulative impacts would be moderate for PWC users but negligible over the short and long term for most other visitors because there would be little noticeable change in visitor experiences.

#### *Visitor Conflict and Safety*

Under the proposed rule Lake Meredith aims to minimize or reduce the potential for PWC user accidents, minimize or reduce the potential for safety conflicts between PWC users and other water recreationists, and provide a safe and healthful environment for park visitors.

Between 1997 and 2001 Lake Meredith park staff issued 122 written violation notices to PWC users, conducted 5 search-and-rescue operations for PWC, and towed 12 disabled PWC. In the same time period six PWC-related accidents occurred, although the only PWC-related injury recorded by park staff happened when one operator attempted to jump-start another craft. Proactive boat patrols in the past five years have resulted in increased safety—prior to 1997, there were two water-related deaths at the park every year for 30 years (although the types of watercraft involved were not documented). NPS rangers and Texas Parks and Wildlife Department officers enforce boating regulations. The Coast Guard Auxiliary also helps with boat patrols. NPS law enforcement staff focus 75% of their time on land activities and 25% on water activities.

PWC speeds, wakes, and operations near other users can pose hazards and conflicts, especially to canoeists and kayakers. Sailboaters are the primary nonmotorized vessels used in the national recreation area, and conflicts could occur with PWC. To date, few conflicts have been reported between PWC and nonmotorized boaters.

Under this proposed rule flat wake zones would be established in lake arms and back coves, and PWC user education would be enhanced.

#### *PWC User/Swimmer Conflicts.*

Impacts would be similar to the current situation since the number of PWC operating within the recreation area is expected to remain constant. Flat wake zones in lake arms could have a beneficial impact on swimmers, since many popular swimming locations occur in such areas. Enhanced PWC education could benefit all visitors by decreasing the potential for conflicts. Overall, PWC use would continue to have negligible to minor adverse impacts on most swimmers at Lake Meredith National Recreation Area.

#### *PWC Users/Other Vessel Conflicts.*

Impacts would be similar to previous

conditions. Flat wake zones would benefit nonmotorized vessels and anglers who fish from boats. Therefore, PWC use would continue to have minor adverse impacts on other motorized boaters and negligible adverse impacts to nonmotorized vessels at Lake Meredith.

#### *PWC Users/Other Visitor Conflicts.*

Establishing flat wake zones in back coves will benefit anglers who have complained about speed violations in these areas. Even though Texas boating regulations require flat wake speeds within 50 feet of the shoreline, some PWC users could be unaware of the regulations. Enhanced PWC education under this alternative would help remedy this situation. PWC use would have negligible adverse impacts to other visitors.

Continued PWC use would have short- and long-term, minor, adverse impacts on visitor conflicts and safety due to the number of visitors and boats present on high use days. Establishing flat wake zones in back coves could benefit anglers who have complained about conflicts with PWC in these areas.

Cumulative impacts related to visitor conflicts and safety would be minor for all user groups in the short and long term.

#### *Cultural Resources*

This proposed regulation aims to control PWC use and access to protect cultural resources, including sacred sites important to Native Americans. Archeological sites are common in Lake Meredith National Recreation Area. A shoreline survey was completed in 1981, and 44 prehistoric and 8 historic sites were located between the high and low waterlines. Sites along the shoreline are most threatened by natural erosion due to fluctuating reservoir water levels and wind-driven wave action. Wave action from vessels and PWC is a minor problem compared to wind-driven waves that hit the shoreline. In recent years, there have been no reports of people taking artifacts from shoreline sites.

Uncontrolled access to cultural sites remains a problem at Lake Meredith. Both PWC users and boaters can access sites along and near the shoreline. The park does not have sufficient staff to enforce regulations throughout the year.

Native American sacred sites that are listed on, or may be eligible for listing on, the National Register of Historic Places may be affected by erosion along shorelines, or by uncontrolled visitor access since riders are able to access areas less accessible to most motorcraft. Previous consultations were held with Native American tribes concerning the