



Photos by Marie Flanagan.

Come on, submit your photos for newsletter fillers! Send them to: [rivertalkeditor@spokaneriver.org](mailto:rivertalkeditor@spokaneriver.org)

## President's Message

By Steve Shamion



Although the summertime surface area of the Spokane River hasn't changed in more than fifty years, watercraft congestion continues to increase at a staggering, and potentially deadly, pace.

While we can't control the development of our shorelines or the growing popularity of our waterway, we can support proposals and initiatives that would significantly reduce the number of potential boating accidents.

Over the past several months, your Board of Directors has had many debates regarding this subject. We also requested feedback from our members, and received several dozen opinions, comments and suggestions. These comments ranged from no-wake restrictions for the entire river to doing nothing at all. However, most of the feedback fell somewhere in-between these two examples.

The Spokane River Association (SRA) Board of Directors is in unanimous agreement when it comes to making our waterway a safer place:

- We are sponsoring boating safety classes (Sunday, June 10th from 9 AM until 4:30 PM – contact Jim Brush at (208) 777-0951).
- We have assisted in the removal of more than 300 piling poles in the river and plan to have another 300 removed within the next year.
- We've met with Kootenai County Marine Sheriff Matt Street on several occasions, which resulted in his department issuing 200 MORE boating violations last year than in previous years.

- We also purchased (and then donated) a decibel DB reader to Sheriff Street's department to monitor and cite loud jet boats that violated our waterway.
- We would also like to see boat safety certification be mandatory for anyone operating motorized watercraft on Lake Coeur d'Alene and the Spokane River.

However, the safety issue currently at hand is a limited, no-tow restriction on Saturdays, Sundays and Summer Holidays between 12 noon and dusk. The Kootenai County Waterway's Commission voted on this proposed restriction on May 21st.

Maybe you're asking yourself what you could have done in support (or opposition) of this towing restriction. One thing I can think of is...get more involved! Have you ever considered becoming a board member? From time to time there are openings. We don't get paid anything, but we usually have a good understanding of the issues that could potentially affect our river. We also sponsor several events, including the Annual Member's Dinner & Meeting (every May) and the End of Season BBQ and Boat Cruise (every September).

Here's an organizational overview of the SRA's Board of Directors, along with the expectations and responsibilities:

The business and affairs of the Spokane River Association are managed and controlled by a Board of Directors. This Board shall not be less than seven (7) and not more than seventeen (17) Directors.

One third of the Directors will be elected by the members at the regular annual meeting and shall serve for three (3) years

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## President's Message (Continued)

or until their successors are elected.

When vacancies occur in the Board of Directors from any cause whatsoever, the Board shall elect new Directors to fill the vacancies.

There shall be an automatic resignation of a Board member missing three (3) consecutive scheduled board meetings without cause. The attendance of a Board meeting by proxy is not considered a missed meeting.

Board meetings are held the third Monday of every month. These meetings currently take place at Templin's Red Lion Resort in Post Falls at 11:45am. They usually adjourn by 1:30pm. Lunch is ordered upon arrival and each member is responsible for payment.

The Board of Directors consists of four officers, (President, Vice President, Secretary and Treasurer)... eight standing committee chair members (Environmental, Membership, Communications, Industrial Relations, Dam Re-Licensing, Property Taxes, Special Events and Safety)... and up to five additional Members at Large.

The SRA was founded in 1987. The purpose of forming the association was to insure clean water, safe recreational boating, prevent beach & shoreline erosion and protect the habitat for native wildlife. Water testing of the Spokane River (by association members) began in 1988 and still continues regularly.

To ensure our objectives are met and the general membership remains informed, officers and board members are expected to attend additional meetings,

workshops and hearings that relate to the Spokane River. Speaking to civic groups, assisting with association events, participating in membership drives and fund-raising efforts are other duties sometimes performed by the all-volunteer Board of Directors.

Twenty years after its formation, the original SRA objectives remain as priorities. However the Board's responsibilities have expanded significantly. The EPA Superfund, Re-licensing of the Post Falls Dam, Wastewater discharge by municipal treatment plants, skyrocketing property taxes, seasonal water levels, boating restrictions and the unprecedented development of our shorelines are some of the additional issues currently being addressed by the SRA Board. In summary, the SRA Officers and Board Members are here to protect and preserve the Spokane River and the quality of life it provides.

If you'd like to explore future Board Member openings, please don't hesitate to contact me directly. I can be reached at (208) 773-3234.

In addition, I'd like to thank Mr. Robert Singletary for entertaining us with a view into the past at the Annual General Membership Meeting & Dinner. Robert is a North Idaho Historian "Extraordinaire" and History Instructor at NIC. His presentation focused on the history of the Spokane River.

As always, please don't hesitate to contact myself or other board members with questions and comments related to our river and your association.

**A few photo from our Annual General Membership Meeting & Dinner are below.**



## Restrictions on the River?

By Jim Aucutt, Vice President, Spokane River Association & Chairman, Kootenai County Waterways Advisory Board



Anyone who is familiar with the Spokane River is fully aware of the increased boat traffic over the past few years, and the resulting congestion and possible danger due to the increase. This situation will only get worse as boat traffic continues to increase. The County has received a variety of suggestions from all type of sources with solutions to this problem. The fact is, there is no solution, although there are steps that can be taken to reduce or manage the congestion and resulting danger.

No one, including the Waterways Board and the County Commissioners want to tell people how to recreate, or to try and control how they choose to enjoy themselves. While on the other hand no one wants to see any deaths on the river, especially, if some modifications of our behavior could have prevented the tragedy. With that in mind, serious consideration is being given to placing restrictions on towing activities on weekends and holidays.

If adopted, these restrictions would eliminate water skiing, wake boarding, and tubing on the river during weekends and holidays. Exactly how this would be worded is still under discussion. It may be from Friday afternoon through the weekend to Monday morning, or it may allow these activities in the AM, or it might just be in effect for Saturday and Sunday. In any event, it would restrict the public's use of the river to some extent.

This proposal has been presented to the Kootenai County Waterways Advisory Board by their sub committee a couple of times over the past few years. At these times the Board failed to approve the proposal. However, this year the Board approved the proposal and recommended to the Commissioners they implement the restrictions after holding a public hearing. This action was taken due to the increasing concern over safety issues on the Spokane River. The Commissioners have indicated they would hold a public hearing on this issue. With the increased congestion, it has become obvious that something must be done.

Your Spokane River Association Board of Directors endorsed this proposal and recommended it to the Waterways Board. Since then we have heard from numerous members via E-Mail and in writing. Over 75% of those who responded were in favor of the Board's position. We thank you for your input and encourage you to let your opinion be known to the Association.

At a public hearing it is usually those who are opposed to what ever is being considered, that turn out in large numbers. Therefore, it is important that the Commissioners hear from those of you who would favor this type of approach. We will publish the time and date of the hearing as soon as it is set.

We have received comments from some members that as property owners along the river we should receive special consideration. The fact is the waters in the State of Idaho are owned by the State and are for the enjoyment of all the citizens. Property owners do not and will not receive any special consideration, other than the fact that as recreational users in close proximity to the waterway, we tend to use the waterway more than most. It is the users of the waterway that will carry the most weight on any decision that may be made.

As frequent users of the waterway we can affect people's behavior by example. If we all know and follow all boating regulations and boating etiquette, we will be providing examples of how boats should be operated on the waterway.

It is only by safe and responsible boating that we can prevent even more restrictive regulations from being enacted. Education and awareness are best defense we can muster. When you see boats being operated in an illegal or unsafe manner, get a Hull Number and description of the vessel and report it to the Marine Division of the Sheriff's Office.

We are all blessed to be able to live and recreate on such a beautiful waterway. Let's all practice what we preach, boat in a safe, responsible, and considerate manner, and truly enjoy what we have been given.



**Spokane River aerial photo courtesy of Big County Helicopters**