

Action Alternative; Proposal #5 for Lake Lowell Deer Flat NWR

Purpose

The purpose of this management alternative is to represent the general public specifically recreational boaters from skiers to bass fishermen, sail boaters, kayaks and canoes

Goals

The citizens of Idaho desire to accomplish a “documented scientific” alternative in establishing our recommendations while giving suitable consideration to key aspects of the management mission of Lake Lowell Deer Flat NWR. Included in this consideration must be the economic impact of all decisions regarding the use of the refuge.

Recommendations

1. Establish a no wake buffer zone
2. Establish a mid season closure to the no wake buffer zone
3. Set a maximum boating speed limit
4. Address no lead tackle and barbless hooks
5. Set boating season and open hours

No wake buffer zone detail

Establish a no wake buffer zone of 200 feet from the emergent weed bed “edge” on the entire north and south side of the lake from the existing no wake buoy line at the upper end of the lake to the Caldwell Dam. All entrances to bays such as Murphy’s Neck and Saxton’s Cove to be included. The existing no wake zone to remain intact (status quo), and access inside these areas to include flooded riparian vegetation will be seasonal! (see mid season closure detail).

Mid season closure detail

Access to the no wake buffer zone and existing no wake zone will be open from 4/15 to 5/30 and closed to all access from 6/1 to 7/15 of each year. The purpose of the closure period is to accommodate indigenous bird and wildlife species requiring undisturbed riparian and emergent weed bed nesting habitat that is unique to the lake. Emergent weed bed “only” inside these zones to re-open from 7/16 to 9/30 of each year.

Maximum boating speed limit

Establish a maximum boating speed limit of 55 mph outside the no wake buffer zone and existing no wake zone.

Lead free tackle and barbless hooks

There is no significant documentation to support a ban on the use of lead fishing tackle and the movement to do so has not been upheld where attempted. Barbless hooks are typically applied to salmonid or cold-water species fish. There is no necessity for their utilization in warm water species.

Boating seasons and open hours

Recreational boating seasons to be open from 4/15 to 9/30 of each year (status quo). Open hours access to boat ramps to be ½ hour before sunrise to sunset (status quo).

Additional comments

From observation of long term lake users “There has been no decline in bird population and best observant guesses are that bird numbers may be as much as ten times the numbers of 20 years ago.”

It is understood that access to the riparian vegetation surrounding the lake is a concern of the preliminary management alternatives for Lake Lowell Deer Flat NWR. “Emphasis on Wildlife-Dependent Public Uses” (page #3 NWR planning update) have not adequately been addressed pertaining to the fishing public.

By definition “the National Wildlife Refuge System Administration Act of 1966, as amended, compatible, wildlife-dependent recreational uses would be the priority public uses and would receive priority consideration in refuge planning and management.” Fishing is a wildlife-dependent recreational use. Lake Lowell’s fishery exists in the flooded riparian vegetation surrounding the lake, “primarily” on the south side in the spring. Historically, as the lake water level drops from irrigation, the fishery migrates to the emergent weed beds. This Action Alternative plan, specifically the no wake buffer zone, and seasonal access with a closure, addresses access to the fishery where the actual fishery exists with conservation of riparian, emergent weed bed and fishery in mind.

Conclusion

The citizens of Idaho, as a majority, do not accept any change from the existing status quo management of Lake Lowell Deer Flat NWR. Our research and conversation with various groups throughout the valley, including legislators have found this Action Alternative plan to be widely accepted, if a change must be implemented.

This proposal has been formulated by utilizing the collective minds of members from The Idaho Bass Federation and Idaho B.A.S.S. Federation Nation who’s combined numbers exceed 500 Idaho citizens. Included in these collective minds is an untold number of non-affiliated bass anglers with the assistance of a graduate of Wildlife Science/Fisheries Biology.