

Yellowstone National Park



# Boating Regulations



Motorized Boating  
Non-Motorized Boating  
Boating Safety & AIS Inspections

Yellowstone National Park offers a variety of boating experiences. Boating in Yellowstone is a memorable experience and a great way to see a different part of the park, but boating in Yellowstone is not without its risks. This brochure has been prepared to assist you in planning ahead and preparing for your boating experience, to help you make your trip as safe as possible and to help you minimize your impact on resources so that Yellowstone can be enjoyed by future generations.

**When permitted**

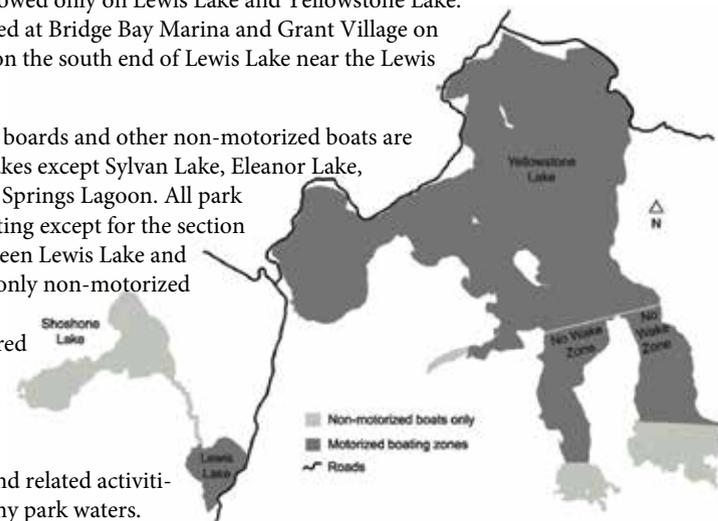
Boating is allowed from the Saturday before Memorial Day through the October 31st.

**Where permitted**

Motorized boats are allowed only on Lewis Lake and Yellowstone Lake. Boat launches are located at Bridge Bay Marina and Grant Village on Yellowstone Lake and on the south end of Lewis Lake near the Lewis Lake Campground.

Canoes, kayaks, paddle boards and other non-motorized boats are permitted on all park lakes except Sylvan Lake, Eleanor Lake, Twin Lakes, and Beach Springs Lagoon. All park rivers are closed to boating except for the section of the Lewis River between Lewis Lake and Shoshone Lake, where only non-motorized boating is permitted. Float tubes are considered non-motorized boats and subject to the same regulations.

Water-skiing, jet skis and related activities are not allowed on any park waters.



# Contents

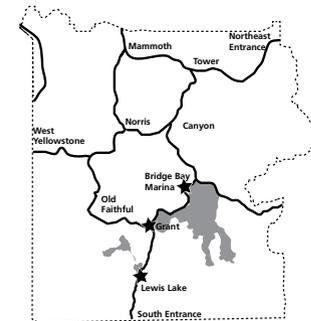
Boat Registration & Permit	1
Required Equipment	2
Recommended Equipment	4
Prohibitions	6
Additional Regulations	6
Boating Safety	8
Invasive Species	14
Yellowstone Lake	15
Lewis Lake & Shoshone Lake	19

# Boat Registration & Permit

All motorized watercraft must be registered in the state of principle use. Registration numbers must be displayed on your watercraft in accordance with US Coast Guard (USCG) regulations.

Additionally, all watercraft, including float tubes, must obtain a Yellowstone National Park Boat Permit. Motorized boat permits and non-motorized boat permits (including float tubes) are available in a 7-day denomination or as an annual permit. Contact the Backcountry Office for current pricing.

All boats, including float tubes, will need to be inspected for Aquatic Invasive Species (AIS). If the boat leaves Yellowstone after it has been inspected, the boat will need to be re-inspected before relaunching.



★ Motorized, non-motorized boat, and float tube permits available at these locations

**Where to Obtain Boat Permits and AIS Inspections**

**Motorized and Non-Motorized Boats:** Bridge Bay Ranger Station, Grant Village Visitor Center's Backcountry Office, and Lewis Lake Ranger Station.

**Float Tubes:**

In addition to the above noted locations, check the Park's website for other locations that can conduct float tube inspections.



Place the Boat Permit and AIS stickers on the port (left) side of the watercraft, approximately one foot forward of the stern (back). On a float tube or stand up paddle board, the permit may be attached directly to the float tube / board or attached via a metal wicket available from the issuing station.



## Required Equipment

In addition to obtaining a Yellowstone Boat Permit you must have the following checked (✓) items as required by the U.S. Coast Guard (USCG):

### ✓ Personal Flotation Device (PFD) –

All vessels must have a US Coast Guard approved, wearable PFD (Type I, II, III, or V) for each person on board. Additionally, boats 16 feet and longer (except kayaks /canoes) are required to have at least one immediately accessible throwable (type IV) PFD. Look on the tag of the PFD to determine type and if it is USCG approved.

*Each PFD must be:*

- *in good condition.* Insure that all zippers, straps and buckles are in working order and can be fastened securely. The PFD must be free from holes or tears



which could affect performance. PFD's made with KAPOC should be carefully inspected to insure that the flotation chambers have not ruptured.

- *readily accessible.* Wearable PFD's must be readily accessible. You must be able to put them on in a reasonable amount of time in an emergency. Children 12 or younger must wear a USCG approved Type I, II, or III PFD when aboard a vessel which is underway, except while inside an enclosed cabin.

Though not required for ages 13 and older, a PFD should be worn at all times when the vessel is underway. In a true emergency you may not have time to locate and properly put on a PFD. A wearable PFD can save your life, but only if you wear it. Sailboarders (Windsurfers)

must wear a USCG approved Type I, II, or III or V PFD. Type V PFDs must be worn at all times.

- *an appropriate size for the intended user.* A properly sized PFD fits comfortably snug and does not come above the

neck or below the waist. Select a PFD based on your planned activities, and the water conditions you expect to encounter.

*Check the fit of the PFD* – Raise your arms over your head and have someone lift the PFD straight up from the shoulders. The PFD should stay in place. If the PFD comes off, or if the chest area of the PFD touches your nose, then the PFD is too big or loose and needs to be secured. If you cannot secure straps or zip the PFD, then it is too small. Also, test the PFD for buoyancy by making sure the PFD keeps your chin above water and you can breathe easily; if your mouth is not well above water get a new PFD with more buoyancy.

A PFD can save your life but only if you wear it.

- ✓ **Sound Producing Device** – A sound device is required for all boats to signal your position in reduced visibility and for navigation to signal your intentions to other vessels. The human voice is not acceptable under USCG regulations. An air horn or whistle is recommended.

- ✓ **Required Lights** – Running lights / navigational lights are required to be displayed at night and when in or near areas of reduced visibility. When underway from sunset to sunrise, every motor boat shall carry and exhibit lights prescribed for the applicable class of motorboat by your state or the USCG. Anchored boats must exhibit a white anchor light except when anchored at designated anchor sites on Yellowstone Lake (5L8, 5L9, 7L5, 7L6, 7M1, 7M4, 7M5, 7F1 & 7F2). Non-motorized boats are required to



have a light (headlamp / flashlight for night paddling or during periods of reduced visibility).

- ✓ **Flame Arrestors** – Required only on inboard engines to prevent backfire. Not required for outboard motors. Unless the motor is very old, it should have been equipped with flame arrestors when manufactured.

- ✓ **Fire Extinguishers** – USCG approved fire extinguishers are required on boats with inboard engines, enclosed compartments, or permanent fuel tanks. Boats under 26 feet must have one Class B-I fire extinguisher. Boats 26 feet and over must have one Class B-II fire extinguisher or two Class B-I fire extinguishers. Labels should read “Marine Type USCG” and specify class and size. Fire extinguishers should be inspected monthly to make sure they are in working order.

- ✓ **Ventilation** – All boats built after August 1, 1980 which use gasoline for electrical generation, mechanical power or propulsion are required to be equipped with a ventilation system. A

natural ventilation system is required for each compartment in a boat that: 1) contains a permanently installed gasoline engine; 2) has openings between it and a compartment that requires ventilation; 3) contains a permanently installed fuel tank and an electrical compartment.

Class B fire extinguishers are designed to extinguish flammable liquids such as gasoline, and propane.

## Recommended Equipment

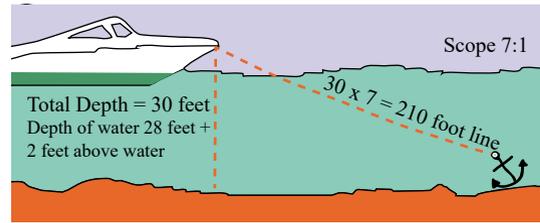
**Oars/paddles** - Motor boats should be equipped with oars or paddles for emergency propulsion. Canoes/kayaks should carry a backup paddle in case a primary paddle is lost or broken.

**Bailing device** - All vessels should carry a suitable manual bailing device such as a bucket/milk jug or hand pump. Even if the boat has a bilge pump or automatic bailing device, a manual backup device



could be vital if these devices don't work. For canoes and kayaks, a bailing device is indispensable in the event of capsizing or if your boat is taking on water.

**Anchor/line** - An anchor and line attached to the bow can be used to keep a boat stationary and to keep it from blow-



ing from or into shore. An anchor which can be set is required for boats anchoring overnight. To properly anchor your boat we recommend at least 210 feet of line - enough for a 7:1 scope in 30 feet of water.

**Visual Distress Signals** - We recommend you carry a variety of devices such as flares, smoke signal, or electric distress signal suitable for both day and night use to signal your position in the event of an emergency. As most devices expire after

3 years, be sure to check the expiration date.

**VHF Marine Band Radio and/or Cell Phone** - A VHF marine band radio is useful for receiving storm warnings and in an emergency for contacting other boats, NPS boat patrol, or the Bridge Bay Marina. You can contact the Bridge Bay Marina and Ranger station on marine band channel 16. Calling 911 on a cell phone may also be helpful in an emergency situation. However, cell phones and marine band radios have limited range and are affected by topography and may not work

everywhere, especially in the arms of Yellowstone Lake.



**Waste Receptacle** - All vessels should have a waste receptacle aboard. Dispose of trash in garbage cans or dumpsters at launch locations. Do not put trash into pit toilets. Draining, dumping, or discharging wastes or refuse, including human waste, into the waters from any vessel is prohibited.



**Compass/GPS unit, maps** - Carry navigational devices and know how to use them.

**Survival gear in dry bags** - even if you are only on a day trip, having a blanket or sleeping bag, fire starter and matches stored in a dry bag could be life saving if, in an emergency, you capsize and / or have to spend the night out.

### **Additional equipment for paddlers:**

**Wet Suit or Paddling Jacket** - can help keep you warm and reduce chances of hypothermia if you capsize in Yellowstone's cold waters. They must be appropriate for the water and air temperatures you will encounter. As a general rule, if air and water temperatures are less than 120° F. then you should wear cold weather exposure gear (wet suit, foul weather gear, etc).

**Paddle Float** - indispensable for kayaks to assist in solo reentry of the vessel in case of capsize.



**Throw Rope** - useful to reach capsized boaters.

**Waterproof Gear Bags/Flotation Bags** - Waterproof gear bags increase flotation and keep clothing and gear dry. Plastic garbage bags may help keep equipment dry, but are not suitable for flotation.

**Inspections** - Any park ranger may at any time stop or board any vessel to examine for Aquatic Invasive species, documents, licenses, and /or permits relating to the operation of the vessel and to inspect such vessels to determine compliance with park regulations including boat safety, backcountry permits and fishing regulations.

## Prohibitions

*The following are prohibited in Yellowstone National Park:*

- Private vessels which exceed 40 feet in length.
- Watercraft equipped with sealed internal ballast tanks.
- Operating a vessel that exceeds a noise level of 82 decibels measured at a distance of 85 feet from the vessel.
- Weapons, other than legally permitted firearms, traps, or chain saws.
- Jet skis, personal watercraft, airboats, submersibles and similar vessels.
- Towing water skiers, wakeboards, parasails or performing similar activities.
- Overnight anchoring or beaching of boats without a backcountry permit.
- Draining, dumping, or discharging wastes or refuse, including human waste, into the waters from any vessel.
- Operating a vessel in excess of 45 mph.
- Operating a vessel while under the

influence of alcohol, intoxicants or drugs.

- Failing to observe restrictions established by a regulatory marker.
- Operating a vessel in excess of 5 mph (approximately 1,000 - 1,100 RPMs) within marinas, boat launch areas, and the arms of Yellowstone Lake or within 100 feet of a swimmer or diver's marker.
- Operating a vessel in a reckless or negligent manner, or in a manner which endangers or is likely to endanger any other person or property.
- Operating a motorized vessel while any person is riding on the gunwales, transom, or on the decking over the bow, except when the vessel is being maneuvered for anchoring, mooring or casting off moorings.
- Operating in any commercial capacity within the park, unless written authorization has been granted by the Superintendent.
- Using trailers to launch or recover vessels at a site other than a designated boat launch ramp.
- Overloading a boat.

## Additional Regulations

**Operator age** - You must be at least 16 years of age to operate a power-driven vessel unsupervised. People age 12-15 may operate a power-driven vessel under direct supervision of an adult age 18 or older.

**Pets** - Pets are allowed on motor boats when traveling on Yellowstone Lake and Lewis Lake, but must be of appropriate size for the size of the boat. Pets are not allowed on boats for overnight trips or on shore except at boat launch areas.

**Generators** - Generators may not be brought ashore. Self-contained motor boats staying overnight at a backcountry campsite should obey quiet hours and not operate generators or boat motors between the hours of 8 p.m. and 8 a.m.

**Fishing Permit Required** - Yellowstone National Park Fishing Permits are required and are available at backcoun-

try offices, visitor centers, Yellowstone General Stores, local businesses in the outlying communities, and online at [www.recreation.gov](http://www.recreation.gov). Refer to park fishing regulations for details and make sure you understand creel limits, tackle restrictions, and proper fish cleaning methods in bear country.



**Backcountry Permit** - Camping or sleeping on your boat requires a backcountry permit and is allowed only at designated sites and anchorages. Backcountry permits for parties travelling by boat may be obtained at the following locations:

- Snake River Ranger Station
- Grant Village Backcountry Office
- Bridge Bay Ranger Station

For more information about picking up backcountry permits and making advanced reservations please reference the Camp in the Backcountry page on our website.

**Food Storage** - Whether picnicking, camping onshore at a designated campsite, or leaving your boat unattended to fish or day-hike, you must follow proper backcountry food storage regulations to minimize the opportunity for bears and other wildlife to obtain human food. All food and odorous items must be properly hung or secured in an approved bear resistant food container. Do not leave food in the open or in a cooler on your boat at any time when no one is in direct attendance. All backcountry campsites have a food pole or metal storage box. Items which are hung must be at least 10 feet off the ground and 4 feet from the tree trunk. You will need a minimum of 35 feet of rope or more if you have multiple containers and / or coolers. If your boat is self-contained and you are staying on your boat at one of

the anchor or dock sites, then you must securely store your food below deck.

**Disabled vessels** - Visitors are required to notify park rangers of sunken, grounded or disabled vessels.



*Food stored properly on a food pole*

## Boating Safety

You are operationally and legally responsible for your safety and the safety of your passengers. Don't take your safety for granted and don't count on someone else to save you. Many recreational boaters assume they are safe because they're in small boats, in shallow water, or because they're good swimmers. Regardless of your level of experience – know your limits. Over 50 people have lost their lives on Yellowstone Lake, Lewis Lake and Shoshone Lake. Most of these deaths were preventable and are primarily a result of having improperly or overloaded boats, traveling far from shore, not wearing life jackets, not traveling with other group members, not being able to self-rescue, and making open-water crossings in windy weather.

### *Cold Water Survival*

Yellowstone's lakes are high elevation, cold lakes. Water temperatures range from the mid-30's in June to only the

low 60's (degrees Fahrenheit) in August. Even when the water temperature in Yellowstone's lakes is at its highest, your survival time, if immersed, is limited.

Sudden immersion in cold water can induce rapid, uncontrolled breathing, cardiac arrest, and other physical body conditions, which can result in drowning. Always wearing a PFD will help you survive in rapid immersion situations.

### *Hypothermia*

Hypothermia is the abnormal lowering of internal body temperature. Immersion in water speeds the loss of body heat and can lead to hypothermia. After 5 to 10 minutes in cold water, your core body temperature drops, the brain becomes confused and disoriented, and your arms and legs become numb. Eventually, if you are unable to get out of the water you will lose consciousness and could die.

Getting out of the water is only the first step. It is important to get to shore and promptly remove all wet clothing (especially cotton) and rewarm your body. Put

on dry clothing, wear a hat, or get into a sleeping bag.

Combat hypothermia by being prepared and planning ahead – wear your PFD and avoid conditions which could swamp or capsize your boat. Travel close to shore. Practice and be prepared for self-rescue. Wear clothing appropriate for the conditions.

### *Accidents & Reports*

Any vessel operator involved in an incident that results in property damage, injury, or death to any person or property must report the incident to a park ranger as soon as possible, or within 24 hours.

### *Carrying Capacity / Overloading*

Overloaded boats are dangerous and illegal. While underway, no vessel shall carry more than a safe capacity of persons and /or total weight, taking into consideration water and weather conditions, hull configuration, and intended use. Do not exceed the load limits as listed on the "U.S. Coast Guard Maximum Capacities" information label

or Capacity Plate found on all boats except sailboats, canoes, kayaks, and inflatables. Too many people and /or too much gear will cause the boat to become unstable. Always balance the load so that the boat maintains proper trim. Here are some things to remember when loading your boat:

- Distribute the load evenly fore and aft and from side to side.
- Keep the load low.
- Keep passengers seated (do not stand up in a small boat).
- Properly load gear to prevent shifting. In a canoe, improperly packed and fastened gear may contribute to sinking in case of capsize, but properly packed (using dry bags) and fastened gear may aid in flotation.

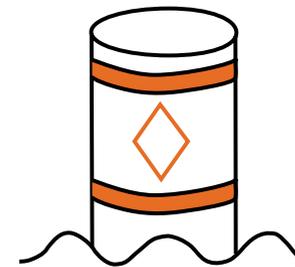
### *Navigation, Rules of the Waterways*

The Statutory Rules of the Road enacted by Congress to prevent collision of vessels must be followed by all operators. Keep to the right when approaching another boat head-on or nearly so. Keep to the right in channels when safe and

practicable. Motorized boats shall keep clear of non-motorized boats. Yield right-of-way to vessels you overtake or pass and vessels on your right side in crossing.

### *Submerged Hazards*

Known hazards on Yellowstone Lake and Lewis Lake are identified on the maps on pages 17 and 21. On the lakes,



*Hazard Buoy*

hazards are marked with a Danger, Stay Away Buoy, but buoys may not always be in place particularly early or late in the season. Watch for shallow spots anytime you are traveling close to shore. Stay alert for floating hazards, such as large logs, and report them to a ranger if possible.



*An improperly loaded and unbalanced canoe.*

## Wind & Weather

Weather in Yellowstone can be unpredictable and can change rapidly. Check the local weather forecast before leaving the dock. NOAA weather radios can receive National Weather Service broadcasts of weather information specific to Yellowstone at frequency 162.450 MHz. Bridge Bay Marina will issue weather advisories and warnings over VHF marine band radio, but you should continually keep a “weather eye” to the sky looking for potential changes in the weather.



In Yellowstone, even most sunny summer days will have afternoon winds, typically out of the southwest and it is not uncommon for thunderstorms with strong winds, high waves, and lightning to approach without warning. Waves of 3 to 4 feet are common on Yellowstone Lake, Lewis Lake and Shoshone Lake. The biggest safety threat of wind is in swamping or capsizing your boat and encountering a situation which could lead to hypothermia and drowning. Your best chances of avoiding rough water are to boat early or late in the day. Even so, you may still encounter large waves and dangerous conditions.

### *Please consider these strategies for a safe trip on Yellowstone's lakes:*

- Travel close to shore and in areas protected from wind.
- Carefully plan itineraries to minimize or avoid open water crossings.
- Avoid open water crossings if you lack the ability to perform a self-rescue or team-rescue.
- Make open water crossings when it's calm, do so quickly, and don't stop.
- Pay attention to the wind direction and where it's pushing you.
- Wait out windy conditions – don't

risk your safety or the safety of your group.

- Use a big enough boat for your activity. Deep v-hull designs handle the best in rough water.
- Don't overload your boat with people or gear.
- Place at least one experienced paddler in each boat and consider practicing capsize recovery techniques with all party members prior to your trip.
- Travel as a group – stay within audible range of other party members.

### *What to do in severe weather and high waves:*

- Non-power boats should always travel close to shore and get out of the water. Be prepared to wait out storms on shore in a safe place.
- Power boats, if possible, should head for the nearest shore that is safe to approach.
- Reduce speed, but keep just enough power to maintain headway.
- Put on PFDs if you're not already wearing them.

- Turn on running lights.
- Head bow of boat into the waves at about a 45-degree angle.
- Keep bilges free of water.
- Seat passengers on bottom of boat near center line.
- If your engine fails, trail a sea anchor on a line from the bow to keep the boat headed into the waves. A bucket will work as a sea anchor in an emergency.
- Anchor the boat if necessary.

### *There are several signs which may indicate approaching weather changes:*

- Weather changes usually come from the west and southwest.
- Watch for cloud build up, especially rapid vertically rising clouds.
- Watch for sudden drops in temperature and changes in wind direction or speed.
- Continue to look for oncoming storms throughout the day.



### Self Rescue

The first step of self-rescue is prevention. Avoid the need for a rescue in the first place. Stay within your abilities and plan and practice self rescue before leaving for your trip. Don't wait until you need to self-rescue to try one and don't count on someone else to save you. If you tip

over far from shore, you'll need to get back into your boat and bail out any water. Having help from others is much easier than getting in by yourself. Prudent paddlers always

travel in groups, but because boaters can become separated by wind, waves or weather, self-rescue must be practiced. A variety of techniques exist to re-enter kayaks and canoes, but they need to be practiced before you embark on a trip.



**If you fall overboard or capsize and are unable to re-enter your boat:**

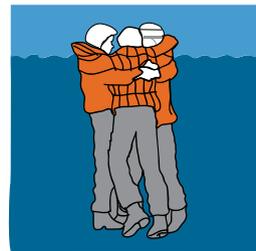
- Keep your PFD on and remain calm
- Do not waste energy by thrashing about or trying to remove clothing or footwear. This leads to exhaustion and increases the loss of air that keeps you afloat. If you are close to shore you may be able to float on your back and paddle slowly to safety, but do not swim unless you are very close to shore and can do so quickly. Swimming pumps blood away from

the core of your body and into your extremities which can shorten your survival time.

- Minimize heat loss. If possible, cover your head and button clothing. Keep your head out of water and get as much of your body out of the water



*H.E.L.P. Position*



*Huddle Position*

as possible. Fifty percent of body heat is lost from the head. Crawl onto the overturned boat if possible. If not, assume the Heat Escape Lessening Posture (H.E.L.P.) position or the Huddle Position if with others.

### Alcohol

Alcohol is the number one contributor to boating-related accidents and deaths. Do not consume alcohol while boating. Boating under the influence is illegal.

### Carbon Monoxide Hazards

Carbon Monoxide can be a "silent killer" on recreational vessels. Each year, boaters are injured or killed by carbon monoxide. Virtually all of the poisonings are preventable. Carbon monoxide is a by-product of combustion of carbon based material such as gasoline, propane, charcoal, or wood. Common sources aboard boats include main and auxiliary engines, generators, cooking ranges, space heaters, and water heaters. Cold and poorly tuned engines produce more carbon monoxide than warm properly tuned engines.

Carbon monoxide can collect within a boat in a variety of ways. Exhaust leaks (the leading cause of death by carbon monoxide) can allow carbon monoxide to spread throughout the boat and into enclosed areas. Even properly vented exhaust can re-enter a boat if it's moored too close to a dock or another boat, or if the exhaust is pushed back by prevailing winds. Exhaust can re-enter boats when cruising under certain conditions especially with canvas in place. Exhaust can also collect in enclosed spaces near the stern swim platform.

### What To Do To Stay Safe?

- Schedule regular engine and exhaust system maintenance inspections by experienced and trained mechanics.
- Keep forward facing hatches open to allow fresh air circulation in accommodation spaces, even in inclement weather.
- Keep people clear of the boat's rear deck area and swim platform while either the generator or engines are running. Always monitor the swimming area.
- Do not confuse carbon monoxide poisoning with seasickness or intoxication. If someone on board complains of irritated eyes, headaches, nausea, weakness or dizziness, immediately move the person to fresh air, investigate the cause and take corrective action. Seek medical attention, if necessary.
- Install a carbon monoxide detector in each accommodation space on your boat. Check the detectors periodically to be sure they are functioning properly.

- If your carbon monoxide detector alarm sounds, immediately open windows and doors for ventilation and move people into fresh air. Seek medical attention if necessary. Turn off engines, generators, and any fuel burning appliances. Don't ignore the alarm, investigate the source of the problem and seek qualified help in fixing the problem.



*If you could see carbon monoxide accumulating around your boat it, might look like this.*

## Invasive Species

### *Aquatic Invasive Species Threaten Yellowstone Waters –*

Yellowstone's world class fisheries are threatened by the introduction of aquatic invasive species. AIS and nonnative organisms are a major threat to aquatic resources, wildlife, visitor recreation, and infrastructure. Once established, AIS can cause irreparable harm and species extinction. AIS can drastically alter habitats and food webs, negatively affecting sport fish and food resources for native wildlife. There are few effective or inexpensive means of controlling AIS and eradication is usually impossible.

Currently at least eight aquatic invasive species already exist in Yellowstone's waters: New Zealand mud snail, red-rimmed melania, five nonnative fish, and whirling disease. The quagga mussel and Eurasian watermilfoil are two other aquatic invasive species that are quickly approaching the park and there are many others now in North America.

Often so small they are difficult to see, aquatic invasive species are transported or "hitchhike" from one lake or stream to another within the water of a boat bilge or livewell, in mud and sand, and on plant fragments attached to boats, fishing equipment, or clothing.

*Prior to being issued a boat permit and launching into any of Yellowstone's waters all watercrafts are required to be inspected for Aquatic Invasive Species.*

**How you can help** - Prevent further spread of these invaders by making sure all equipment is clean and free of destructive aquatic invasive species prior to entering the park and when moving from one lake or stream to another:

- Prior to entering the park, clean your boat with high pressure hot water (120-140 degrees F), including the bilge and livewell areas, and flush your engine cooling system. Leave drain plugs out during transport.
- Thoroughly clean any mud,

vegetation or debris from boats, trailers, fishing equipment, clothing and footwear before moving among different bodies of water. As of 2018 felt soled waders and boots are not permitted in Yellowstone.

- Be sure to drain livewells prior to moving to a new lake or stream, and only clean fish in the same body of water in which they were caught. Do not move or dump water or organisms from one body of water into any other body of water.
- Drying your boat and other equipment in the sun for at least five days after cleaning is also helpful since some species cannot survive out of water.



*See page one for boat permit and aquatic invasive species inspection locations.*

## Yellowstone Lake

Yellowstone Lake is the largest fresh water lake above 7,000 feet in the United States, and the second largest above 7,000 feet in the world. Its 136 square miles with 110 miles of shoreline provide an exceptional backcountry experience for motorized and non-motorized boaters.

### *Launch Locations*

Boat ramps are located at Bridge Bay Marina and Grant Village. Only boats which can be carried (canoes/kayaks) may launch from Sedge Bay along the northeastern shore of Yellowstone Lake. Boats which can be carried may also launch from the parking area along Gull Point Drive for day trips only. The Bridge Bay Marina and Grant Village Launch Ramp Lagoon are No Wake Zones. At Bridge Bay Marina, there are separate parking areas for day-users and overnight users. Please consult with the rangers at Bridge Bay for more information. Sailboats may use the boat ramps at Bridge Bay Marina and Grant Village.

To access the main body of Yellowstone Lake from the Bridge Bay Marina, boaters must travel under a bridge where the road crosses the inlet to the marina bay. A sailboat with raised mast cannot make it under this bridge. Sailboats must navigate under the bridge with the mast down and step the mast while on the water. Once a sailboat has progressed under the bridge, there is a beach in a no wake zone that we recommend you use to step the mast. A retractable keel is helpful under these circumstances. Please check with the Bridge Bay Marina rangers for current water levels, and further details on how to safely get under way from Bridge Bay Marina.

The boat ramp at Grant Village has no overhead obstructions and is generally steep enough that a sailboat with a keel of average depth can be launched with no problems. However, if lake levels are very low, a boat with a non-retractable keel may encounter some difficulty.

### *South, Southeast, & Flat Mountain Arm Regulations*

To maintain the wilderness character of the South, Southeast, and Flat Mountain Arms of Yellowstone Lake, travel restrictions have been enacted. Motorized craft are restricted to a wakeless (5 mph) speed south of the mouths of the South and Southeast Arms. The lower sections of the South, Southeast and Flat Mountain

Arms are designated as Non-Motor Zones. Only boats without motors or boats which are designed to be hand propelled (sailed, rowed, or paddled) with motors disabled may travel in the Non-Motor Zone. Disabled means that the motor propeller has been lifted out of the water and / or removed from the transom. From mid-June to October, buoys are installed marking the 5 mph and Non-Motor Zones. It is your responsibility to know where these zones begin and end even when buoys are not installed.



### Restricted landing and travel areas on Yellowstone Lake

Landing vessels within 25 feet of any geothermal area and on the shore line of Yellowstone Lake between Little Thumb Creek and the south end of the West Thumb geothermal area is prohibited.

Anchoring is prohibited in the Grant Village Launch Ramp lagoon, the Bridge Bay Marina, and in Bridge Bay within 300 yards from shore between the Lake Hotel and the entrance to the Bridge Bay Marina.

The tributaries of Yellowstone Lake, including north of the outlet toward Fishing Bridge, are closed to boating.

**Frank Island** – the entire island, except for the immediate dock area (southeastern finger), is closed to public use from May 15 until August 15 to protect nesting birds. There is a picnic area along the southeastern finger of Frank Island which is open to landing, and has a dock, outhouse, fire grates, & picnic tables. On-shore camping is prohibited, but

self-contained vessels may anchor offshore overnight with a valid backcountry permit.

**Stevenson Island** – the southern end of the island is closed to public use from May 15 until August 15 to protect nesting birds. The northern end is open to day use, but there are no docks, fire grates or tables.

**The Molly Islands** – located in the Southeast Arm, the islands are a sensitive area for nesting birds and are closed to any landing. In addition, to minimize disturbance to the resident birds, boaters must travel no closer than 1/2 mile from the islands or no further than 100 yards from shore between campsites 6A1 and 6A2.

### Beaching & Storing Boats

Due to rocky shorelines and rough waves, boats must be removed complete-

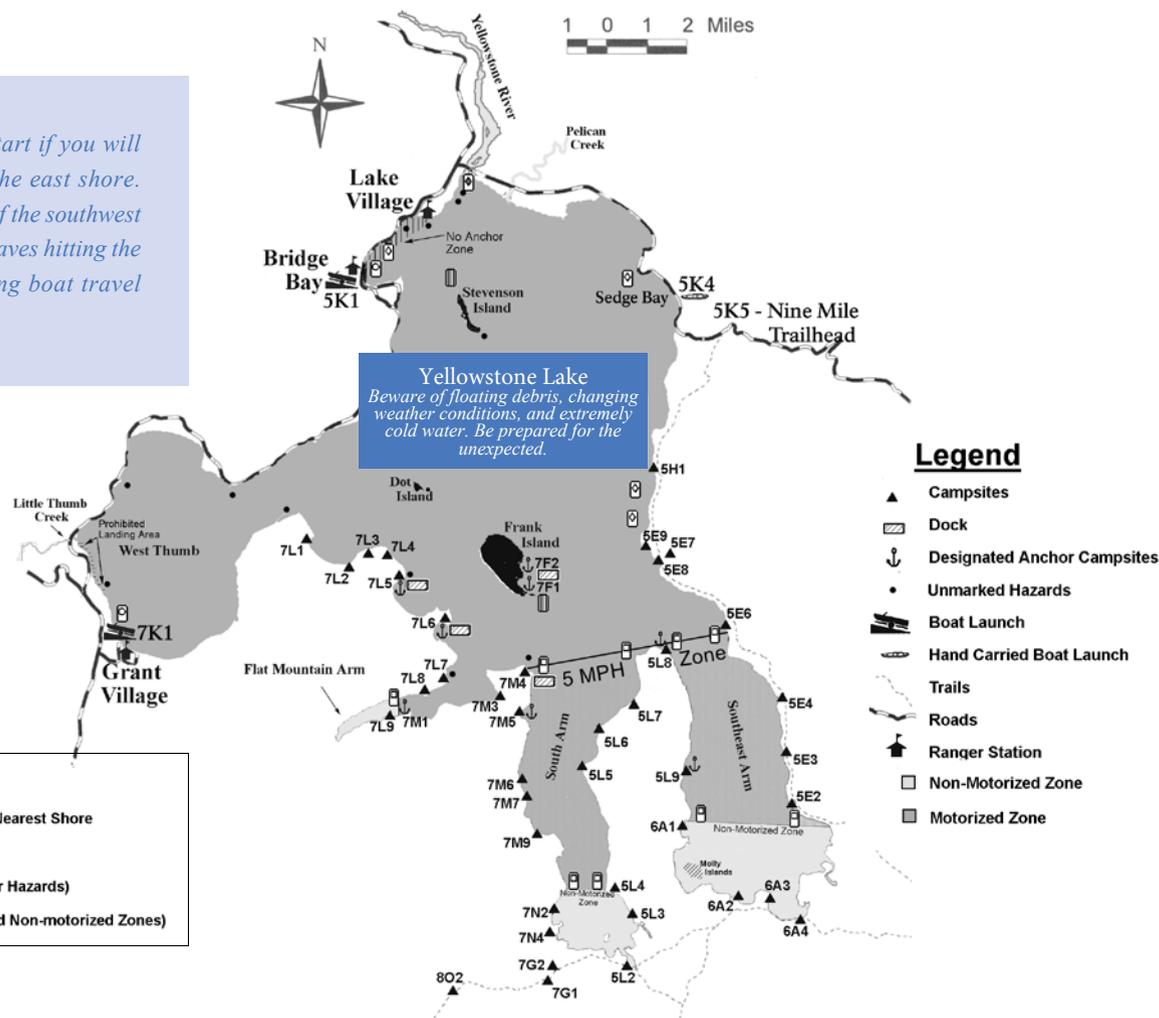
ly from the water along some sections of shoreline on Yellowstone Lake. Refer to the Backcountry Trip Planner and the list of campsites and their restrictions for detailed information.

Parties with backcountry permits which combine boating and backpacking may store their boat on land during the time they will be backpacking provided that the boat is small enough to be completely removed from the water, is stored out of sight of trails, campsites and the lake, and that no food, trash, or odorous items are left in the boat. Caches are not allowed in the backcountry. With the exception, of boating equipment (boats, paddles, PFD) all other items may not be left unaccompanied.

The tributaries of Yellowstone Lake, including north of the outlet toward Fishing Bridge, are closed to boating.

Try to get an early start if you will be travelling along the east shore. Afternoon winds out of the southwest often result in large waves hitting the east shore and making boat travel difficult.

- Restricted Area - No Boats
- Do Not Pass Between Buoy & Nearest Shore
- Speed Zone (Found in Marina)
- Danger, Stay Away (Found Near Hazards)
- Special Restrictions (5 MPH and Non-motorized Zones)



### Shore Proximity

Power boats larger than 16 feet must travel no closer than 1/4 mile from the shoreline of the South & Southeast Arms. For reference, the buoys marking the 5 mph zone and non-motorized zone are placed 1/4 mile from shore. Boats are permitted to be closer than 1/4 mile from shore only when accessing campsites and the shoreline to embark or disembark or when they are stationary fishing from an anchored or moored boat.

Non-motorized boats and power boats under 16 feet are strongly recommended to stay within 1/4 mile of shore in the event that they need to get to shore quickly.

### Docks

Docks are located at backcountry campsites 7L5/Wolf Point, 7L6/Eagle Bay, 7M4/Plover Point, and at the southeastern tip of Frank Island. If unoccupied, day users may tie up to the docks and use the picnic tables on shore. However, parties with backcountry permits have

preference for use of these facilities.

### Bear Management Area Restrictions

Bear Management Areas have been established in Yellowstone National Park to reduce human related impacts on bears and provide areas where bears can pursue natural behavioral patterns free from human disturbance. Much of the shoreline of Yellowstone Lake falls within the boundaries of various Bear Management Areas.

Yellowstone Cutthroat Trout are a primary food source for many grizzly bears. In the spring, Yellowstone Cutthroat Trout spawn in the many tributary streams surrounding Yellowstone Lake. Because of the spawn

and associated concentration of grizzly bears, there are a number of campsites in the arms of Yellowstone Lake which are closed and other campsites where travel away from the core camp or off of designated trails is not allowed prior to July 15.

Consult the Yellowstone Bear Management Area Map on our website for a map of the Bear Management Areas and a list of detailed restrictions.



Dock Site

## Lewis Lake & Shoshone Lake

Lewis Lake is the only location other than Yellowstone Lake where motorized boats may operate. Shoshone Lake is the largest backcountry lake in the contiguous United States and a magnificent wilderness resource. It has no road access and only hand-propelled boats may reach its waters.

### Launch Locations

A boat ramp is located on the southeastern shore of Lewis Lake near the entrance to the campground. Non-motorized boaters are encouraged to launch from the boat ramp and travel along the more protected western shore. Non-motorized boats which can be hand carried may also be launched from a roadside pull-out along the northeast shore, but the northeast shore launch location has very limited parking and is not recommended due to potentially dangerous rough water and high waves. At the Lewis Lake boat ramp, there are separate parking areas

for day and overnight users. Please pay attention to the signs.

Motorized boating is allowed on Lewis Lake only. The non-motorized zone begins at the mouth/southern end of the Lewis River Channel. Parties with motors on their boats who are travelling to Shoshone Lake must remove the motor from the boat and store it on shore upon entering the Lewis River Channel. For added security boaters may wish to use a chain and lock to secure their motor.

### Lewis River

The Lewis River Channel between Lewis and Shoshone Lakes is approximately 3 miles long. Paddling upstream on the Lewis River Channel is not possible for about the northern most mile of the



Pulling a canoe up the Lewis River Channel in late-July

channel due to a swift current in the early season and shallow water later in the season. You will need to walk upstream wading in cold water through a rocky bottom stream, lining your boat behind. Having at least fifteen feet of rope makes this an easier task. In June and early-July, during spring run-off, expect extremely cold water temperatures and water depths of 3-4 feet. You may wish to consider wearing a wetsuit if you are planning a trip during the early season. By mid-July, run-off starts to subside and water temperatures slowly warm.

### Shoshone Geyser Basin

Boaters can access the geyser basin via the small bay in the northwest end of the lake where there is a landing area and a trail to the basin. Look for a large orange marker identifying the landing area. Do not leave food items unattended in your boat. A bear resistant food storage box is located at the landing area for you to store any food and odorous items while you visit the geyser basin. A trail leads from the landing area into the geyser basin. Foot travel in thermal areas must be confined to designated trails, off trail travel is prohibited.

### Narrows

The Narrows is the section in the middle of Shoshone Lake where the north and south shores are closest (approximately 1/2 mile). If you need to make an open water crossing you should evaluate conditions wisely and cross only at the Narrows.

Crossing between the north and south shore at places other than the Narrows is strongly discouraged due to the length of time you are exposed and far from shore.

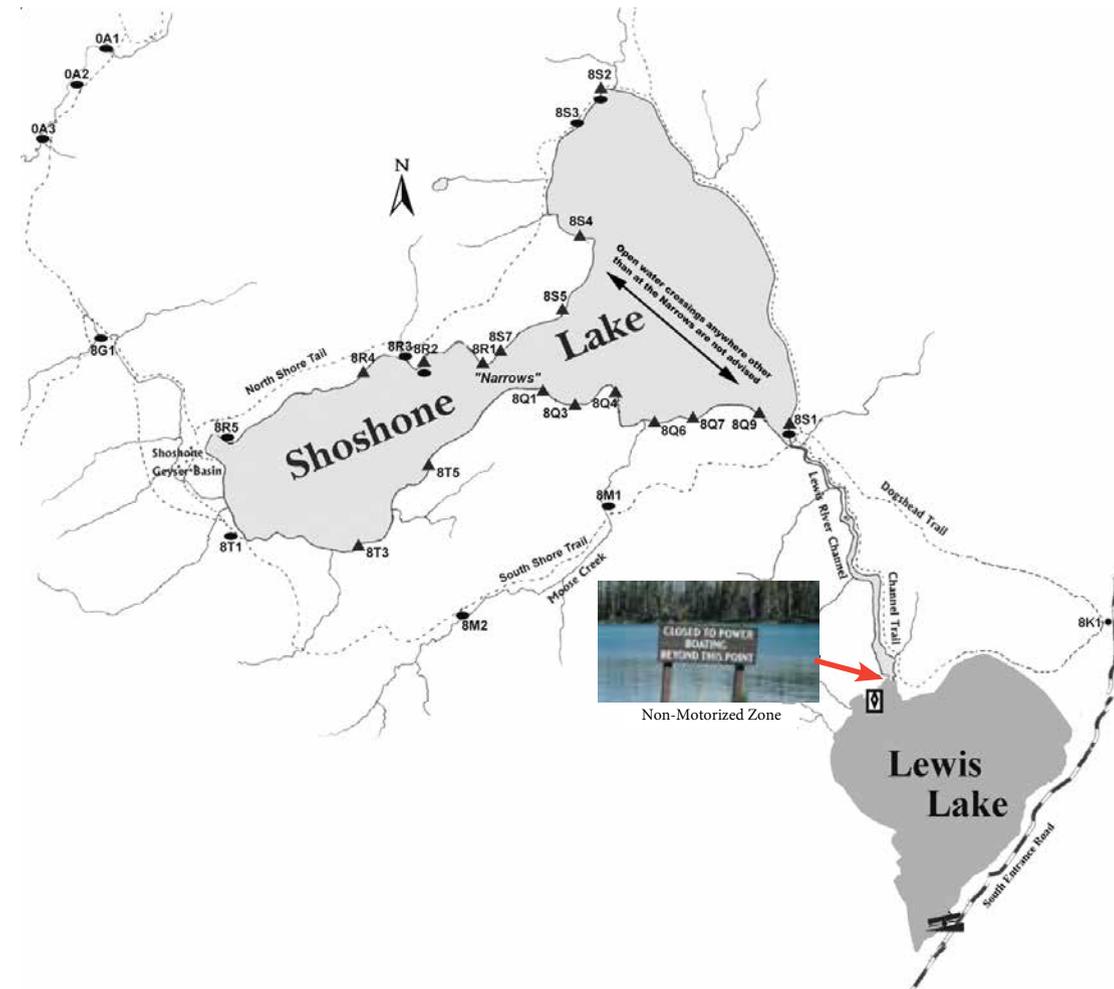
Winds and waves on Shoshone Lake can develop suddenly at any time putting you in a dangerous situation if you are far from shore.

We suggest you select a site on the southern shore of the lake for the first night of any overnight trip. Plan itineraries so that you make any open water crossings in the early morning before winds pick up (around 10 a.m.). Early mornings typically have the calmest weather on Shoshone Lake, however strong winds may occur at any time. Carefully evaluate conditions and wait out storms and strong winds at a safe location on shore if needed.

### East Shore

The east shore of Shoshone Lake, at first appearance, may look like the easiest route between campsite 8S2, the northeast corner of the lake and the lake's outlet near campsite 8S1. However, most days, winds on Shoshone Lake come from the southwest causing the east shore to be pummeled by 2-3 foot or larger waves making paddling difficult if not impossible and dangerous. If your

itinerary takes you to the northeast corner of the lake, you should include in your plans time to travel between these locations via the Narrows and the more protected sections of shoreline.





### *For More Information:*

Contact the Central Backcountry Office at (307) 344-2160 or look for it online at [www.nps.gov/yell/planyourvisit/backcountryhiking.htm](http://www.nps.gov/yell/planyourvisit/backcountryhiking.htm)

- Yellowstone Forever  
(books & maps) 406-848-2400 or [www.Yellowstone.org](http://www.Yellowstone.org)
- Yellowstone Lake Backcountry Boat Shuttle Service  
Reservations 307-242-3893 (June - Mid. Sept.) or  
307-344-5217 (Mid Sept.- May)
- Xanterra Reservations (Hotel, Campground,  
Activities) 866-439-7375.  
[www.yellowstonenationalparklodges.com](http://www.yellowstonenationalparklodges.com)
- Recreation.gov (Backcountry Reservations,  
Campgrounds)  
[www.recreation.gov/camping/gateways/2988](http://www.recreation.gov/camping/gateways/2988)
- Emergency 911

For additional information on boating safety visit:  
USCG Boating Safety [www.uscgboating.org](http://www.uscgboating.org)

*NPS Boating Regulations can be found in Title 36, Part 3 of  
the Code of Federal Regulations. It is your responsibility to  
know and obey the United States Coast Guard and State of  
Wyoming regulations for boat operation and safety.*