

**DICKINSON COUNTY**

IOWA



**DICKINSON COUNTY  
EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT COMMISSION**

**IOWA GREAT LAKES  
NO-WAKE POLICY**

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# Introduction

## Purpose

The purpose of this document and policy is to designate set water levels on the Iowa Great Lakes where the no-wake zone will extend from 300 feet to 600 feet and in extreme cases, a no-wake policy would be implemented.

## History

Major flooding occurred in the Iowa Great Lakes area in 1993. More recently, a high-water event occurred in 2011. While the 2011 event was far below the 1993 event, there were still issues with shoreline erosion and bank collapses. The Emergency Management Commission held an emergency meeting at the request of the Iowa Department of Natural Resources and residents on East Lake Okoboji to request that a 600' no-wake rule be put into effect.

In 1993, a 300-foot no-wake restriction was put in effect on July 8<sup>1</sup>. On that day, Big Spirit was at 48" (18.19') and the Okobojis were at 41" (7.46'). A complete no-wake rule was implemented on July 12<sup>2</sup> when Big Spirit had rose to over 51" (18.44') and the Okobojis were at 48" (8.05'). The lakes would crest about a week later. The restrictions were partially lifted on August 14<sup>3</sup>.

In 2011, the 600-foot no-wake restrictions were implemented on July 15. Big Spirit was at 15" (15.40') and the Okobojis were at 26" (6.20'). The lakes crested the following day (July 16) and the restrictions were lifted on August 2.

## Intent

The intent of this document is to establish set levels on Big Spirit Lake and the Okobojis (West Okoboji, East Okoboji, Upper Gar, Minnewashta and Lower Gar) whereby the no-wake rule would be extended from the normal distance of 300 feet from shore to 600 feet and also when a complete no-wake rule would go into effect.

The Commission fully understands the impact that an extended and complete no-wake could have on local businesses and resorts. Tourists could choose to cancel vacations if they aren't able to boat on the Iowa Great Lakes which would in turn mean lost tourism dollars. At the same time, we are trying to protect the shoreline from unnecessary erosion and bank collapses. While we can't control wave action due to high winds, we can try to control wave action caused by watercrafts.

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<sup>1</sup> Flooding prompts no wake ruling. (1993, July 8). Spirit Lake Beacon, p. 1.

<sup>2</sup> No wake rule extended. (1993, July 15). Spirit Lake Beacon, p. 1.

<sup>3</sup> Rorholm, J. (1993, August 19). Boaters flock to lakes once no-wake lifted. Spirit Lake Beacon, pp. 1-5.

## Data

The historical data referenced in this document is taken from the United States Geological Survey (USGS) gauges that are located at Lakeside Lab on West Lake Okoboji and Marble Beach State Recreation Area on Big Spirit Lake.

Levels will be in inches above the weir and also feet (in parenthesis) according to the gauge.

For Big Spirit Lake, the weir is 0" (14.15').

For the Okobojis, the weir is 0" (4.04').

## Websites

Big Spirit Lake Gauge: [waterdata.usgs.gov/ia/nwis/uv/?site\\_no=06604000](http://waterdata.usgs.gov/ia/nwis/uv/?site_no=06604000)

Okobojis Gauge: [waterdata.usgs.gov/ia/nwis/uv/?site\\_no=06604200](http://waterdata.usgs.gov/ia/nwis/uv/?site_no=06604200)

Dickinson County Emergency Management: [www.dcem.us](http://www.dcem.us)

## 600' and Complete No-Wake Levels

For all lakes, the emergency 600' no-wake rule will go into effect when the lake level reaches 6 inches (0.5 feet) below the ordinary high water mark for that lake. The complete no-wake rule will go into effect when the lake level reaches the ordinary high water mark for that lake.

Lake	Weir Level	Ordinary High Water Mark	600 Foot No-Wake	Complete No-Wake	Record Level
Okobojis & Lower Lakes <sup>4</sup>	0" (4.04')	30" (6.54')	24" (6.04') <sup>5</sup>	30" (6.54') <sup>6</sup>	55.9" (8.7') on July 17, 1993
Big Spirit Lake	0" (14.15')	24" (16.15')	18" (15.65')	24" (16.15')	55.7" (18.8') on July 18, 1993

The emergency rule can be implemented for just Big Spirit Lake or the Okobojis as water levels dictate. If implemented for the Okobojis, the rule will apply equally to West Okoboji, East Okoboji, Upper Gar, Minnewashta, and Lower Gar.

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<sup>4</sup> Includes West Okoboji, East Okoboji, Upper Gar, Minnewashta, and Lower Gar.

<sup>5</sup> As measured by the USGS gauge at Lakeside Lab.

<sup>6</sup> As measured by the USGS gauge at Lakeside Lab.

## **Okobojis & Lower Lakes**

Historical USGS data from the past 53 years (1965-2018) shows that at these levels, the 600' no-wake rule would have been implemented only four times: 1965 (5 days), 1984 (8 days), 1993 (101 days) and 2011 (7 days).

The same data shows that only one time (1993 – 58 days) would the total no-wake rule have had to be implemented.<sup>7</sup>

## **Big Spirit Lake**

Historical USGS data from the past 53 years (1965-2018) shows that at these levels, the 600' no-wake rule would have been implemented only three times: 1969 (7 days), 1993 (128 days), and 1995 (2 days). It should be noted that there was a span from late 1975 until 1990 where no historical data is available for Big Spirit Lake. Given the high water noted on the Okobojis in 1984, it could be assumed that there were likely four times that the 600' no-wake rule would've been implemented in the past 50 years.

Like the Okobojis, there has been only one time in the past 50 years that the full no-wake would've been implemented: 1993 (89 days).<sup>8</sup>

## **Other Dickinson County Lakes**

For other lakes in Dickinson County, including but not limited to, Silver, Center, and Little Spirit, restrictions on these lakes will be implemented on an as-needed basis after consultation with the Department of Natural Resources and any adjacent municipalities.

These lakes do not have gauges therefore it is not possible to set definitive levels at which an emergency rule could be implemented.

Little Spirit Lake is a border lake and the Commission does not have authority to impose these rules in Minnesota. Any restrictions will apply to Iowa waters only.

## **Public Notification**

The Emergency Management Commission will make every effort to notify the public when these restrictions are in effect. These methods will include local radio and television stations, newspapers, websites, social media, and any available mass notification systems. In addition, the Commission will notify the Cities, the Iowa

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<sup>7</sup> USGS Current Conditions for USGS 06604200 West Okoboji Lake at Lakeside Lab near Milford, IA. (2018, April 25). Retrieved April 25, 2018, from <http://nwis.waterdata.usgs.gov>

<sup>8</sup> USGS Current Conditions for USGS 06604000 Spirit Lake near Orleans, IA. (2018, April 25). Retrieved April 25, 2018, from <http://nwis.waterdata.usgs.gov>

Department of Natural Resources, and area Chamber of Commerce and tourism offices. The Commission will rely on these groups to help notify residents and visitors of the restrictions in place. The Commission will utilize these same methods of notification when any restrictions are removed.

## **Exemptions**

Emergency vessels responding to an emergency situation shall be exempt from the no-wake restrictions. These vessels include (but are not limited to) those belonging to any Law Enforcement Agency or Fire/Rescue Department. These vessels shall, however, abide by the no-wake rules when not operating in an emergency response mode.

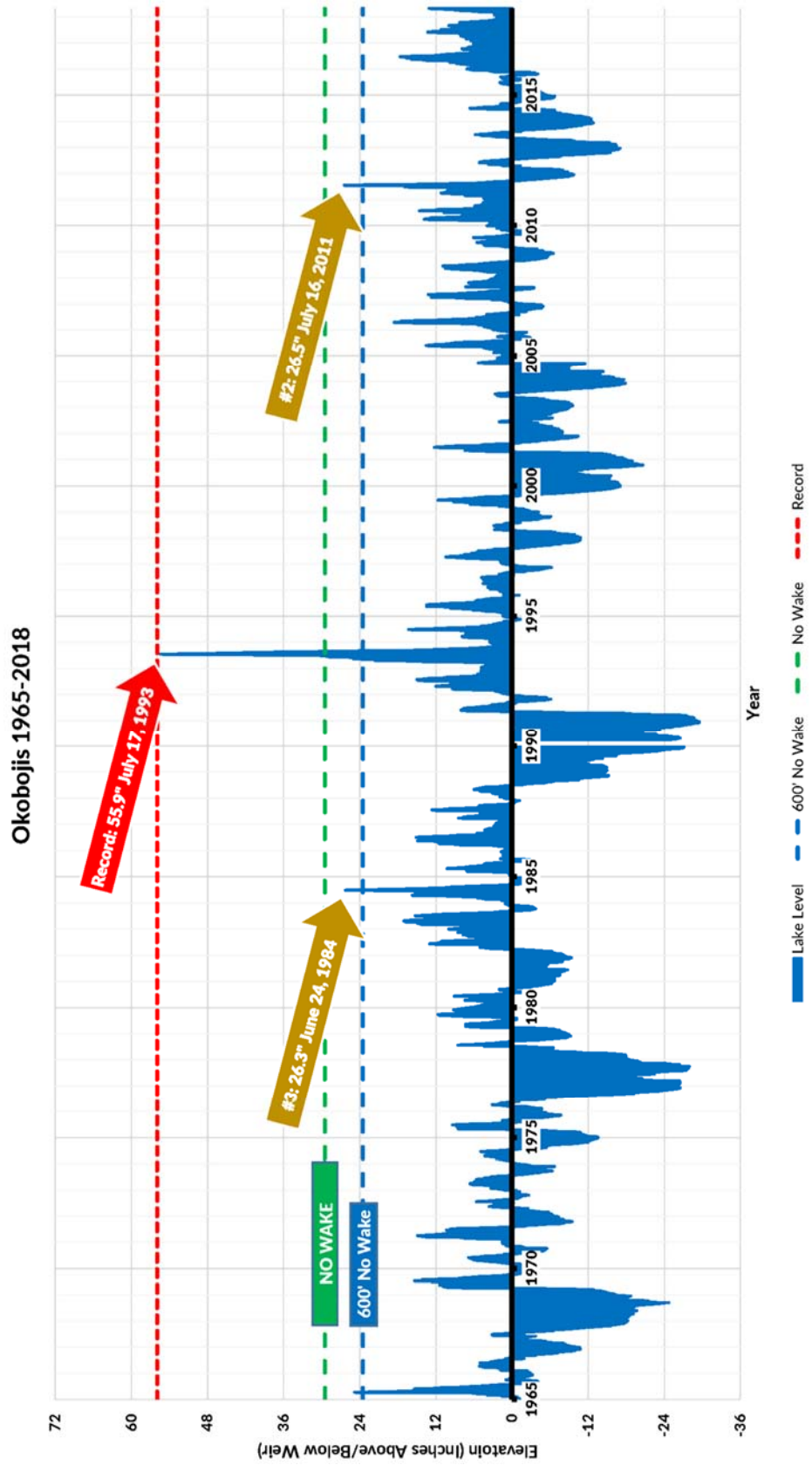
## **Enforcement**

These restrictions shall be enforced by the Iowa Department of Natural Resources.

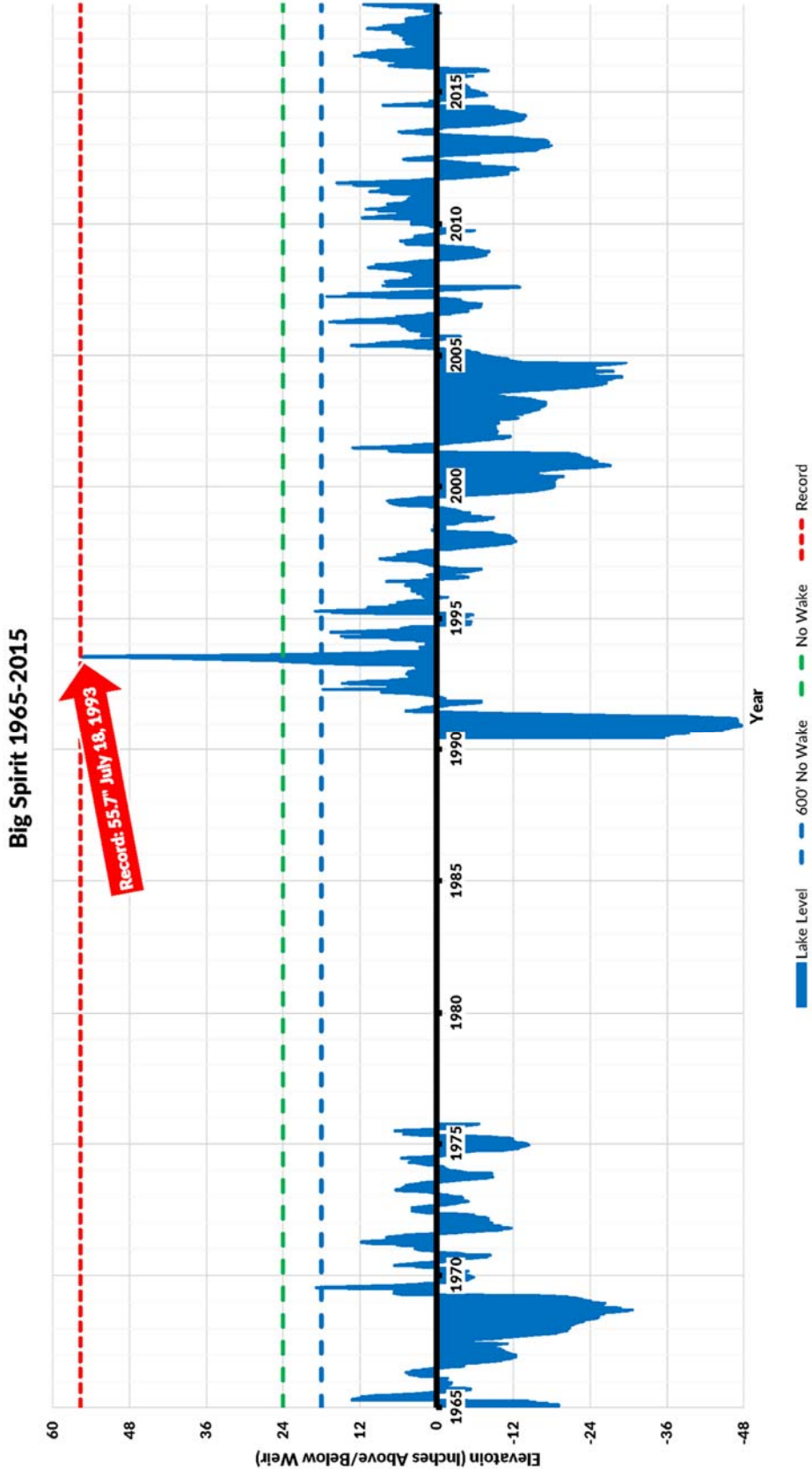
## **Removal of Restrictions**

The 600' no-wake and complete no-wake restrictions will be lifted once water levels recede below these levels for three (3) consecutive days.

# Appendix 1a: Historical Data - Okobojis

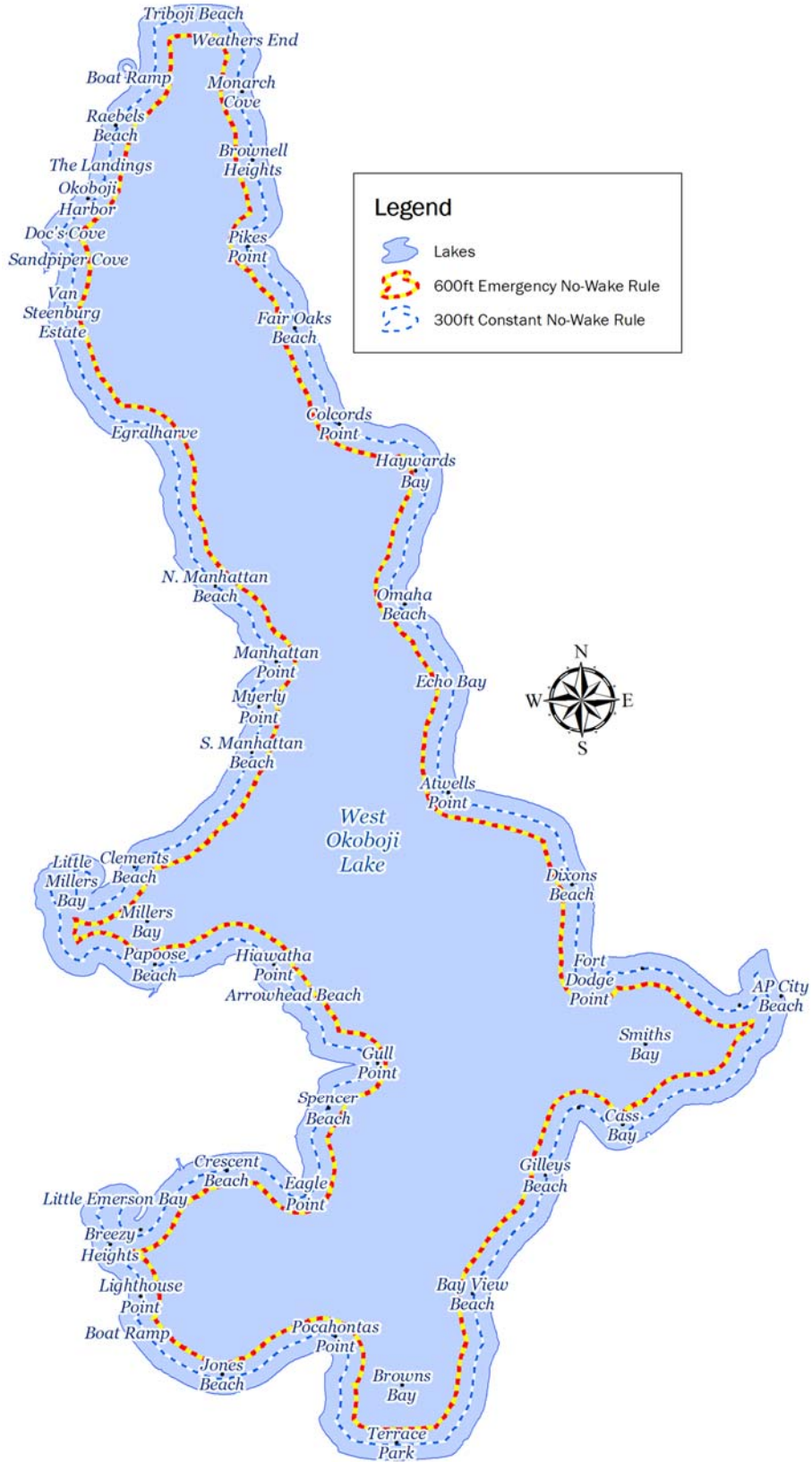


# Appendix 1b: Historical Data – Big Spirit Lake

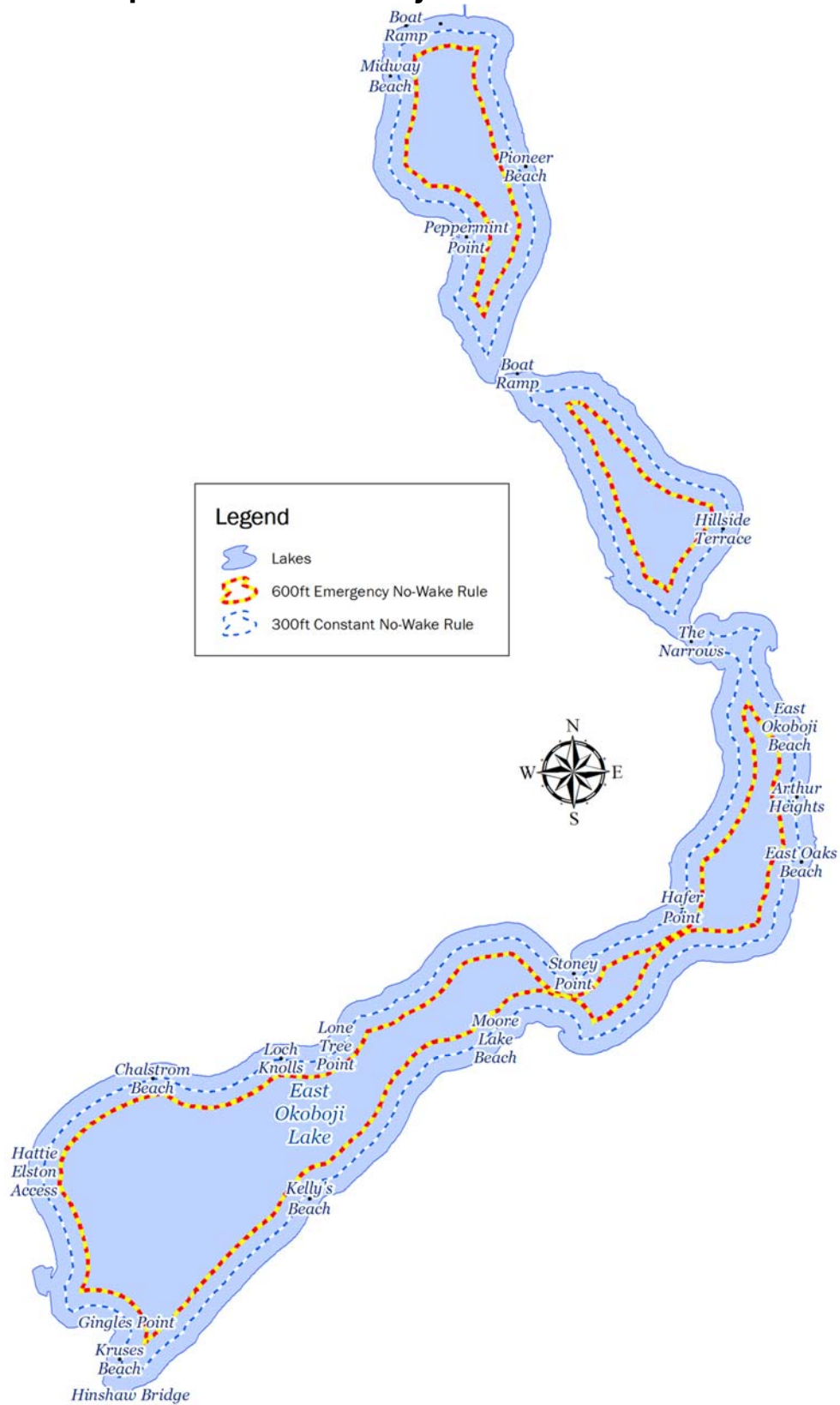




# Appendix 2a: Map – West Lake Okoboji



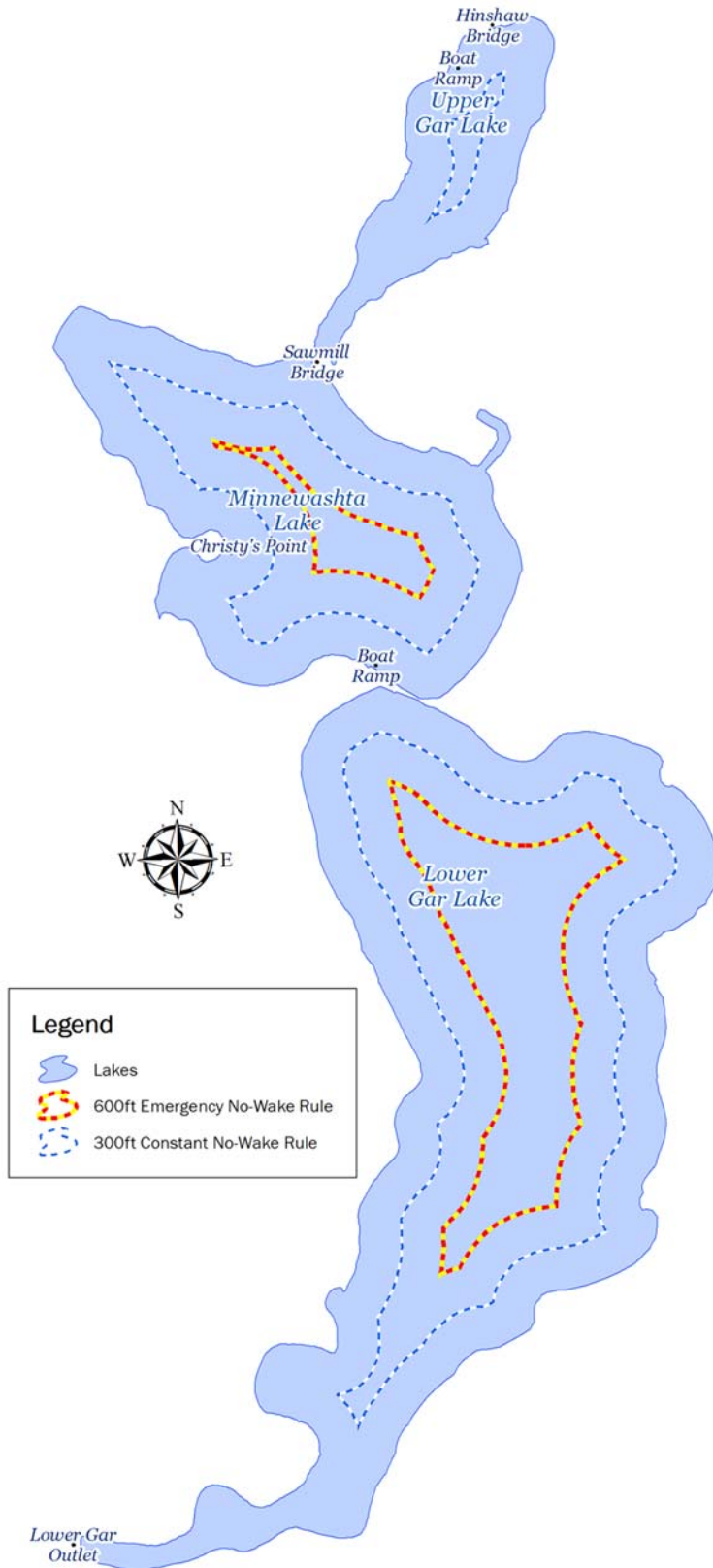
## Appendix 2b: Map – East Lake Okoboji



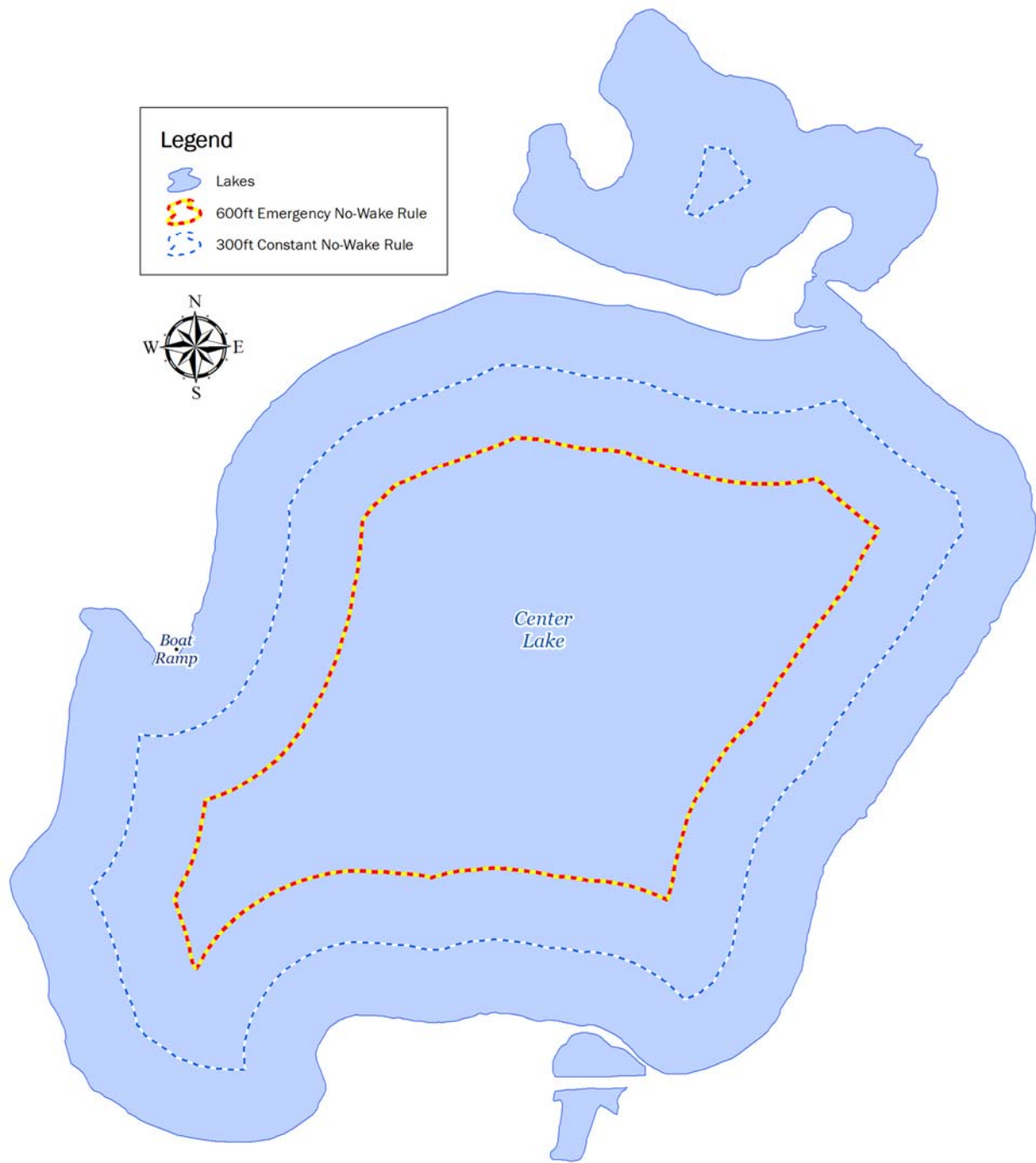
## Appendix 2c: Map – Big Spirit & Little Spirit Lakes



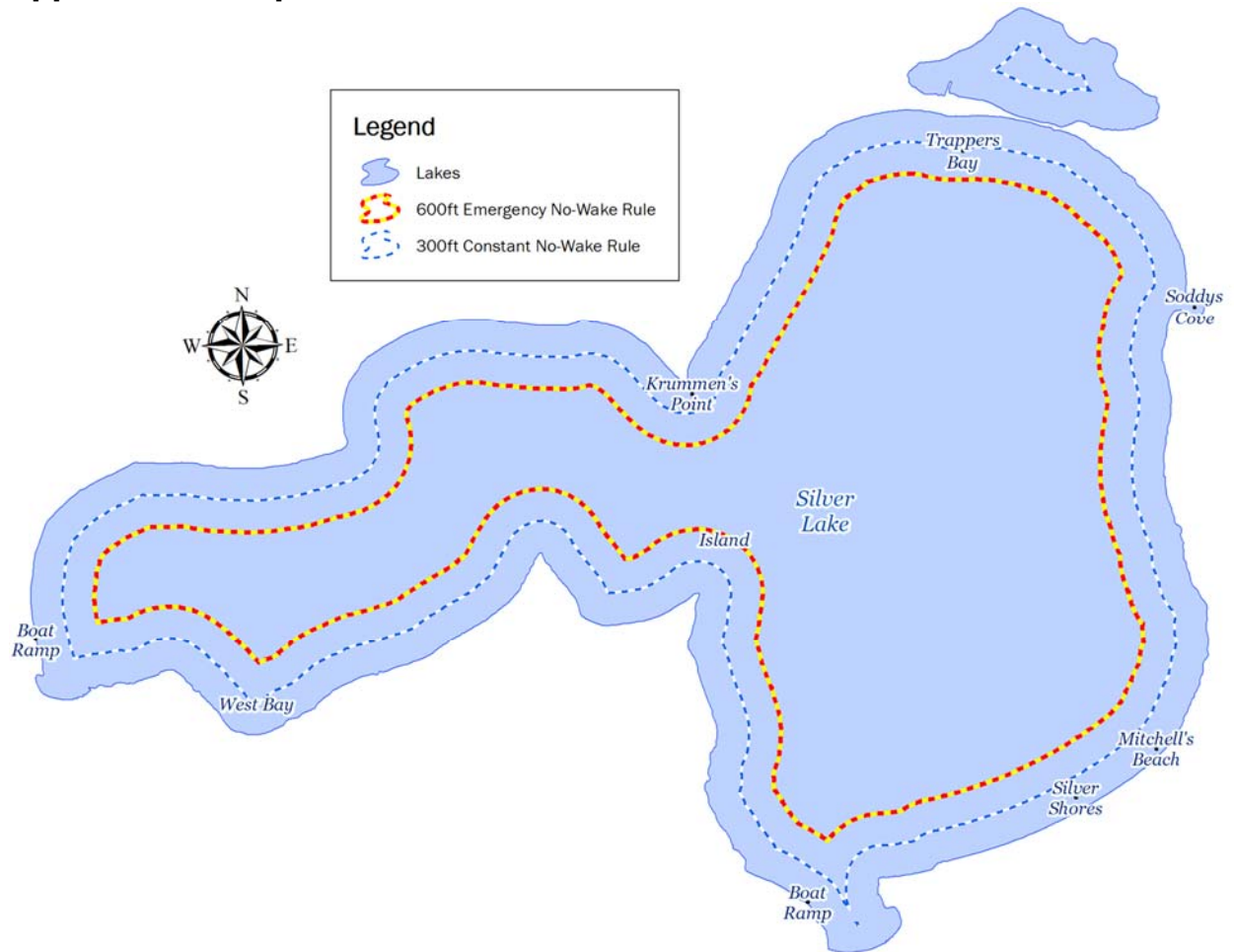
# Appendix 2d: Map – Upper & Lower Gar & Minnewashta Lakes



## Appendix 2e: Map – Center Lake



## Appendix 2f: Map – Silver Lake



### Appendix 3: Acreages of Lakes and No-Wake Zones

Lake	Total Acres	Acres Outside 300' No-Wake Zone	Acres Outside 600' No-Wake Zone
Big Spirit Lake	5,361	4,812 (89.8%)	4,335 (80.9%)
West Lake Okoboji	3,879	3,201 (82.5%)	2,563 (66.1%)
East Lake Okoboji	1,848	1,261 (68.2%)	753 (40.7%)
Upper Gar Lake	36	4 (11.1%)	0
Minnewashta Lake	123	53 (43.1%)	10 (8.1%)
Lower Gar Lake	252	130 (51.6%)	51 (20.2%)
Center Lake	257	147 (57.2%)	79 (30.1%)
Silver Lake	1,033	788 (76.3%)	566 (54.8%)