



**MICHIGAN DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES**

---

**INTEROFFICE COMMUNICATION**

---

**TO:** Lt. Thomas R. Wanless, Boating Law Administrator

**FROM:** Corporal Jill Miller, Marine Specialist

**DATE:** November 2, 2022

**SUBJECT:** Investigative Report – Cisco Chain of Lakes – Channel between Thousand Island Lake to Big Africa Lake, Watersmeet Township, Gogebic County

Under the direction of Part 801 “Marine Safety” of 1994 PA 451, MCL 324.80110(2), the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) has conducted an investigation and inquiry into whether special rules are needed on a portion of the Cisco Chain of Lakes – Channel between Thousand Island Lake and Big Africa Lake, located in Watersmeet Township, Gogebic County and included a consideration of all the following:

**A. Whether the activities subject to the proposed special rules pose any issues of safety to life or property.**

Activities subject to the proposed special rules do not pose any additional issues of safety to life or property.

**B. The profile of the water body, including local jurisdiction, size, geographic location, and amount of vessel traffic.**

The channel between Thousand Island Lake and Big Africa Lake is located within section 1 and 35, town 44 and 45 north, range 41 west, township of Watersmeet, county of Gogebic. There are not many residences on Big Africa, Little Africa, and Record Lake so vessel traffic is minimal. The channel is approximately 24 feet at the narrowest spot.

**C. The current and historical depth of the water body, including whether there is an established lake level for the water body.**

The channel has a depth of approximately one to eight feet in depth. There was no data on established lake levels.

**D. Whether any identifiable special problems or conditions exist on the water body for the activities subject to the proposed special rules, such as rocks,**

**pier heads, swimming areas, public access sites, shallow waters, and submerged obstacles.**

Traveling northbound from Thousand Island Lake to Big Africa Lake, the entrance of the channel is shallow and narrow at times with a lot of tree stumps. Also, at the mouth of the channel on the west side there is one dock. There are partially submerged logs and trees throughout the whole channel. Most are on the edges but there a few obstacles in the middle of the channel as well. Further into the channel on the east side, there is another dock tucked back in the marshy area of the channel.

**E. Whether the proposed special rules would unreasonably interfere with normal navigational traffic.**

Any special rule or local control may adversely affect vessel operation by restricting vessel speeds and increasing time of travel.

**F. Whether user conflicts exist on the water body.**

There have been no user conflicts reported.

**G. Complaints received by local law enforcement agencies regarding activities on the water body.**

Research through the Department of Natural Resources Communications Section shows that over the most recent 5-year period there have been no complaints reported to our Report All Poaching hotline. A check with Watersmeet Township and Gogebic County showed no other reported complaints on this channel.

**H. The status of any accidents that have occurred on the water body.**

The U.S. Coast Guard Boat Accident Reporting Database shows no boating accidents reported in the last five years.

**I. Historical uses of the water body and potential future uses of the water body.**

The water bodies are used by kayaks, anglers, recreational boaters, rowboats, and paddleboards. Except for the transfer of ownership of private residences, no other potential uses are in the foreseeable future.

**J. Whether the water body is public or private.**

Thousand Island Lake and Big Africa Lake are public lakes.

**K. Whether existing law adequately regulates the activities subject to the proposed special rules.**

Existing laws may address concerns that were brought up regarding high-speed boating.

*The following are the existing regulations:*

NATURAL RESOURCES AND ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION ACT (EXCERPT)  
Act 451 of 1994

**324.80149 Operation of vessels in counter-clockwise fashion; distance between persons being towed and other objects; exception; violation as misdemeanor; violation as civil infraction; fine.**

**Sec. 80149.**

(1) A person operating a vessel on the waters of this state in areas not marked by well defined channels, canals, rivers, or stream courses shall operate the vessels in a counter-clockwise fashion to the extent that it is reasonably possible. These persons and persons being towed on water skis or on a water sled, kite, surfboard, or similar contrivance shall maintain a distance of 100 feet from any dock, raft, buoyed or occupied bathing area, or vessel moored or at anchor, except when the vessel is proceeding at a slow—no wake speed or when water skiers are being picked up or dropped off, if that operation is otherwise conducted with due regard to the safety of persons and property and in accordance with the laws of this state. Except as otherwise provided in subsection (2), a person who violates this section is guilty of a misdemeanor.

**324.80146 Maximum or unlimited vessel speed; rules; maximum vessel speed where limits not established; exceptions; resolution requesting reduction in maximum speed limit; emergency conditions; temporary speed limit requirements; time limitations; declaration of state emergency; requiring slow—no wake speed or minimum speed; violation; fine; exceptions; waiver.**

**Sec. 80146.**

(9) A person shall not operate a vessel on the waters of this state at a speed greater than slow—no wake speed or the minimum speed necessary for the vessel to maintain forward movement when within 100 feet of the shoreline where the water depth is less than 3 feet, as determined by vertical measurement, except in navigable channels not otherwise posted.

Based on the information obtained through this preliminary investigation, concerns related to public safety and compatible use on the channel from Thousand Island Lake and Big Africa Lake, within the jurisdiction of Watersmeet Township, Gogebic County, are negligible. Further information will be gathered at a public hearing for Cisco Chain of Lakes – Channel between Thousand Island Lake and Big Africa Lake.