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For an Emerald Green, Ocean Blue Coronado

JETTISON GAS-POWERED JET SKIS

On any hot summer weekend, the San Diego Bay is filled with personal watercraft (PWC) racing on the water. This summer, it seems, there are more than ever. With agility and power, PWCs, better known by the tradename Jet Ski, offer an exhilarating ride.

But the experience comes at a cost with environmental and safety concerns.

Most PWCs are powered by gas engines, which contribute to air and water pollution. As motorized vessels, PWCs are regulated by the Environmental Protection Agency and the California Air Resources Board. Improvements over the last 25 years have substantially reduced emissions. But Jet Skis use fossil fuels, and pollutants enter the water and air.

An average Jet Ski will burn through 15 gallons of gas in one to two hours at full throttle. At cruising speed, a PWC uses about three to four gallons in an hour.

OTHER HARMFUL EFFECTS

• **Noise pollution.** Jet Skis can produce up to 90 decibels of noise, which is the equivalent of leaf blowers, which were banned in Coronado in 2021. The loud whining noise

from racing PCWs is not only an irritant to beachgoers, but also disturbs birds and marine animals.

Many birds are already stressed and vulnerable during their migration. When these birds fly away from noises, the extra expenditure of energy can harm a feeding or resting bird. Bird rookeries are especially vulnerable. Disturbing noises can cause birds to leave their nests exposing eggs and hatchlings to the sun's heat and predators.

• **Vibration:** Jet Skis emit vibrations that disturb marine animals and contribute to shoreline erosion. In shallow waters, the craft's turbulence will disturb sediment. This can suffocate fish eggs and dislodge plants.

SPEEDING TOWARD DISASTER

The average PWC can go up to 50 miles an hour, and some models reach 65 miles per hour, putting humans and sea creatures at risk. Seals, sea lions and turtles swimming near the water's surface can be injured from impact by Jet Skis traveling at high speeds.

Teens 16 years or older can drive Jet Skis by themselves if they have a California Boater Card. Kids 12 to 15 years old can drive when accompanied by someone 18 years or older.

Life vests are required; helmets are not.

According to Coast Guard statistics, Jet Skis comprise only 12% of registered recreational boats, yet account for 20% of accidents, the majority of which are caused by excessive speed, inexperience and inattention. On July 29, a 12-year-old girl on a paddle board died after a Jet Ski driven by an 18-year-old crashed into her on Mission Bay. A man died when four PWCs collided under the Coronado Bridge in November 2021.

SOLUTIONS

Electrically powered PWC are available but come at a cost. These high-tech vessels range in price from \$15,000 to \$100,000. As with any high-powered motorized craft, safety training is essential.

Most Jet Ski rental businesses require drivers to be 21 years old. While eliminating teenagers from driving helps reduce some risk, inexperience still poses dangers to riders and anything in their paths.

When planning a day on the water, consider taking out a sailboat, kayak or paddleboard. Without the loud motor, you might see some sea life up close, and you'll help keep Coronado Emerald Green, Ocean Blue.



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