

**OFFICE OF THE CITY COUNCIL**

Jacksonville Waterways Commission

117 W. Duval Street, Suite 425, Jacksonville, Florida 32202

May 12, 2021

9:30 AM

**FINAL REPORT**

**TO: CM Al Ferraro**, Chair

Jacksonville Waterways Commission

**FROM:** Jill Haskell, Chair

Safety Zone Subcommittee

**RE:** Second Amended & Final Report of the Subcommittee on Safety Zones

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OFFICE OF THE CITY COUNCIL

March 9, 2016

M E M O R A N D U M

TO: Jacksonville Waterways Commission Members

FROM: The Honorable John R. Crescimbeni

Chairman, Jacksonville Waterways Commission

SUBJECT: Jacksonville Waterways Commission Adaptive Programming Subcommittee

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I am hereby appointing a Jacksonville Waterways Commission Adaptive Programming subcommittee. The

subcommittee will have a charge of conducting a thorough review of adaptive programming options which could

make Jacksonville's waterways more accessible to persons with mobility deficits, children with developmental

delays and individuals with visual impairments. Following their review, the subcommittee will develop and submit

a report to the full Commission on their findings (by no later than the Jacksonville Waterways Commission

meeting of June 2016), including a prioritized list of programming recommendations - if any

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**CHARGE:** 1) Conduct an additional review of the Ortega River area previously reported to show conditions which would necessitate the need for the implementation of a Safety Zone. We will also allow an additional opportunity for Community and Council Member input.

2) Complete the added task of reviewing the safety issues raised concerning the waters surrounding the bridges that are showing increased boat traffic and other growth. The Heckscher Drive Bridge at Clapboard Creek was of special concern to Commissioner Adkison.

3) Reiterate and confirm the need for a Safety Zone in the Ft. George River.

**MEMBERS:** Jill Haskell, Chair

CM Aaron Bowman

Commissioner Robert Birthland

Officer Pete Goody, JSO Marine Unit

Captain Jim Suber, Director of Waterways, Ex-Officio

Susan Grandin, Office of General Council

**CONCLUSIONS:**

As Chair of the Subcommittee on Safety/Wake Zones, it is my honor to report that an additional review has shown recommendations for action in three areas.

The waterways around the Grand Avenue Bridge at Ortega River continues to be of concern and should be complemented by a Safety Zone. Also, the issues raised by Commissioner Adkison detailing boat traffic under the Heckscher Drive Bridge are evidenced by the increased activity on Clapboard Creek.

The Chair believes that the following recommendations should be expounded upon and put into action:

1. After the original in-depth review of the situation, it is still recommended that the Ortega River area from the Grand Avenue Bridge to SW of Lake Shore Dry Storage, to meet the channel markers already in place, should be a Minimum Wake Zone.

***However***, due the resistance of the constituency in the immediate area, Council support will not suffice to affect the placement of a Safety Zone. It is therefore recommended that an additional two years of data be collected enumerating the enforcement actions on the Ortega River. We can revisit the subject at that time. A map of the area’s previous two years enforcement actions is attached.

***A current Manatee Zone does require slow speeds in the area of concern***. However, the space within 300 ft of the shoreline is populated with Marina docks and this renders the Slow Speed Zone ineffective on the north bank of the river. A map of the area is attached.

1. Secondly, the waterways approaching the Heckscher Drive Bridge at Clapboard Creek should be a Minimum Wake Zone due to the expansion of the Palm’s Fish Camp docks and the congestion in the immediate area. There is also a boat rental business that now operates out of Clapboard Creek Marine. The existence of these conditions calls for the application of Section 327.46, Florida Statutes. Furthermore, the City of Jacksonville has made a significant investment in the Palm’s Restaurant, it’s docks and the adjacent public boat ramp. We should make concessions on vessel operations that would ensure that safety of our users. An overhead map of the area is attached.
2. Lastly, it is unanimous that a Safety Zone be placed in the Fort George River waterway. A detailed review of the FWC Enforcement Actions data demands that this action be taken. We have concluded that a year-round Minimum Wake Zone should be implemented from Kingsley Plantation to the Heckscher Drive/A1A Bridge. This will complement the zone that already exists around the bridge.
   1. Let it be noted that members from the local law enforcement have been calling for some restriction on vessel operation in this area for years. Boat owners generally operate slowly in this area because of the traffic and constantly shifting channel. Therefore, an official Minimum Wake zone will give law enforcement an educational tool as well as swifter control of those who do not operate safely.

I would like to thank the Chair for the opportunity to continue to explore this subject. The additional information used in this report came from an incredible effort by Capt. Jim Suber, and his staff, in the form of a detailed pictorial review of our local bridges. Brian Burkett of Jax Parks was very helpful. And I especially appreciate the expertise that Officer Peter C. Goody of the Jacksonville Sheriff’s Office Marine Unit has brought to our discussions. I hope that our effort to show that the Minimum Wake Zones that are proposed will come to fruition for the safety, benefit and enjoyment of our residents and visitors.

Jill Haskell, Chair

Jacksonville Waterways Commissioner

Safety/Wake Zone Subcommittee