

THANE NEIGHBORHOOD ASSOCIATION

4545 Thane Road
Juneau, Alaska 99801
(907) 586-8277
lspengler@ak.net



Board

Chris Prussing, President

Susan Cable

Larry Cotter

Christopher Dillon

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Kirby Day
Visitor Industry Task Force
Princess Cruises/Holland America Group
704 S. Franklin
Juneau, AK 99801

Re: Thane cruise ship speed reduction request

February 24, 2020

Dear Kirby:

A committee of Juneau's Thane Neighborhood Association board met with you (as a member of Juneau's Visitor Industry Task Force) in late January about some tourism-related issues. One was the pressing need for cruise ship speed (and thus wake wave) reduction along the Thane residential area, from Sheep Creek to Dupont, or even to the end of Gastineau Channel.

You suggested that you would be happy to convey our concerns and request to the Marine Safety Task Force so they can be considered at its April meeting. We appreciate that. Herein we explain the problems the current speed limits (assuming they are being followed) are causing along Thane, and ask that they be reduced between Sheep Creek and Dupont, or between Sheep Creek and the end of the channel.

A few years ago an elderly Thane resident got knocked out of his skiff -- which was moored in front of his home -- by the wake wave of a passing cruise ship. Only by luck did a neighbor see him tumble out so that her husband was able to get him to the beach. As described below, this is only the most serious of many problematic consequences of the current size of the cruise ship wake waves.

You explained at our meeting that there are voluntary speed limits for different sections of Gastineau Channel as part of the Southeast Alaska Voluntary Waterway Guide, set by the Marine Safety Task Force. Currently, those limits are:

- 7 knots between downtown and the Douglas Boat Harbor
- 10 knots between the Douglas Boat Harbor and Sheep Creek
- 14 knots between Sheep Creek and Dupont
- 16 knots between Dupont and the end of the channel

Assuming those are being followed, the speeds are causing danger, damage, and harm. Here are examples of the problems Thane residents have experienced in recent years with the cruise ship wake waves:

- As mentioned above, several years ago a Thane resident got knocked out of his skiff (moored in front of his home) by a cruise ship wake wave. Only by luck did neighbors see him tumble out and rescue him.
- A different Thane resident's skiff, moored offshore from his home, was flipped at its mooring by a wake wave.
- Another Thane resident had his vessel's antennae broken by a wake wave.
- A number of people who have been fishing in small boats along the shore of Gastineau Channel report being tossed violently by very large wakes.
- People fishing for coho by Sheep Creek have been hit by large wake waves when out a bit from shore wearing waders.
- A Thane resident who participates in the shore-based gold dredging just north of Sheep Creek reports that dredgers lose gold when wakes hit and knock them around; it is hard to control the dredges (essentially unpowered boats) in the wake waves.
- Other Thane folk have observed that the big, curling, crashing wake waves are tearing mussels and seaweed loose in the intertidal zone.
- Thane residents who live right down near the channel shore report being awakened in the night by the loud crashing of wake waves.
- Upon seeing a cruise ship approaching, folk who kayak regularly along the Thane shore pull in to shore to wait out the otherwise intimidating waves.
- A Thane family returning to town up Gastineau Channel in a 27' sailboat was almost dumped out of the cockpit when a fast, steep, and very big cruise ship wake hit them diagonally; the wave sent water cascading into the cabin through the open portholes.

In light of these examples, we urgently request a reduction of cruise ship speed between Sheep Creek and Dupont, or between Sheep Creek and the end of the channel.

You mentioned that apparently the cruise ships are given special cautions about their speed and wake around the net pens just north of Sheep Creek. We sincerely hope that the safety of humans and their smaller boats along our residential area will also merit special caution!

If we can provide any other information for the Marine Safety Task Force's consideration of this request, please let us know.

We strongly urge the task force act on this before the coming season!

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Chris Prussing".

Chris Prussing
President, Thane Neighborhood Association

cc: Juneau's Visitor Industry Task Force