



## 2025 Boat Census Survey

Report by: Lianna Spencer, Lake Manager

### Introduction

The Lake Ripley Management District completed the annual boat census survey on Lake Ripley on Monday, July 21<sup>st</sup>, 2025. It took two hours to complete the entire loop, starting at 9:00 a.m. and finishing at 11:00 a.m. The survey was conducted on the District's pontoon boat. The survey crew included Lianna Spencer (Lake Manager), Andrew Sabai (Nature Preserve Technician), Annika Sabai, Dwight Osmon (Water Quality Technician), Colton Hutchinson (JCLWCD), Jim Jermain (weed harvester), and Georgia Gomez-Ibanez (LRMD Secretary). Andrew generously donated his equipment to videotape the shoreline. Lianna, Georgia, Dwight, Colton and Annika counted all vessels along the shoreline. Jim captained the pontoon for the duration of the trip.

As part of the Lake Ripley Management District's ongoing carrying capacity study, the District conducts a boat census survey every summer to document the number of vessels moored on Lake Ripley. By completing this survey, we are able to document the population of local boats on the lake as well as the changes happening in our littoral and riparian buffer zones year by year. We count all boats, motorized and non-motorized, as well as swim mats, boat houses, boat lifts and piers.

### Methods

The crew traveled counterclockwise on Lake Ripley. The pontoon was traveling slow enough to not create any wake the entire time; this gave the crew the ability to accurately count all vessels, swim mats, boat houses, boat lifts and piers. Only moored boats were counted, so as not to count boats coming from elsewhere.

Vessels counted included: pontoons, speed boats, fishing boats, jet skis, kayaks/paddleboards, non-motors/canoes, paddleboats, sailboats, and swim rafts/mats. We also counted boathouses, piers and boat lifts. The weather was warm and overcast, and the temperature was 74°F. The survey was video recorded so that it can be watched later, if needed.

## Results

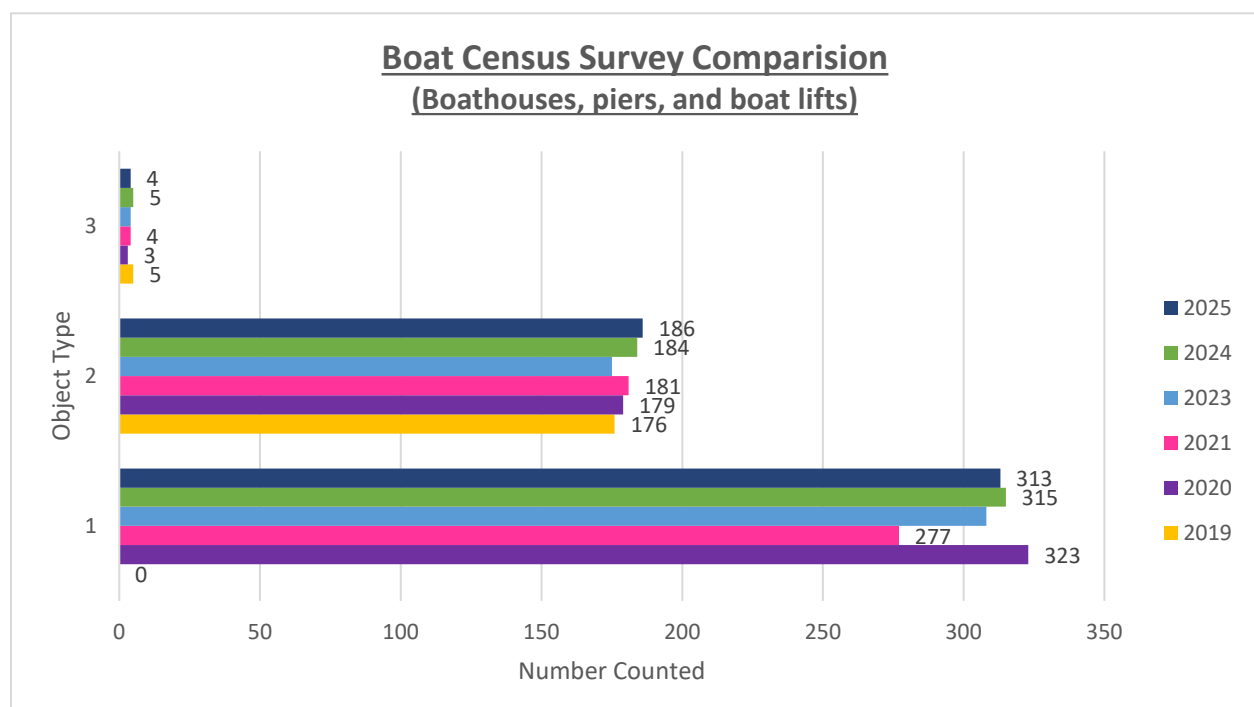
This year, the crew counted 186 piers, 313 boats lifts, 206 pontoon boats, 103 speed boats, 18 fishing boats, 46 jet skis, 151 kayaks/paddleboards, 26 canoes/nonmotor, 11 paddleboats, 10 sailboats, and 25 swim mats/rafts, and 4 boathouses. In total, 575 vessels were counted on Lake Ripley in 2025.

Since 2024, two additional piers were observed in Lake Ripley. This doesn't necessarily mean they are newly permitted piers; some piers don't get installed every year. For example, we counted four piers on the shoreline instead of in the water this year. Additionally, there were two less boat lifts on the lake compared to last year.

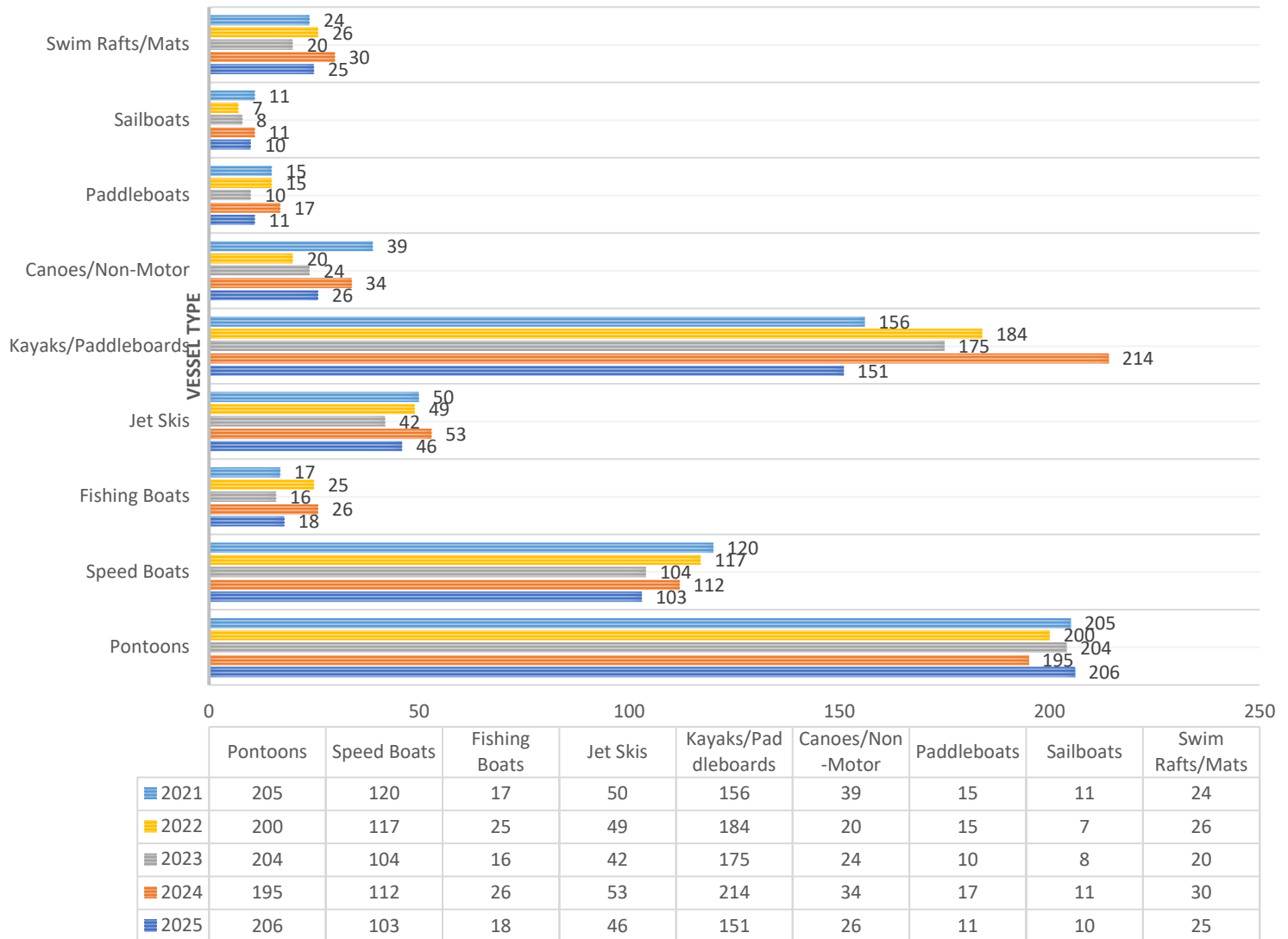
This year, we saw decreases in a lot of categories including: speed boats, fishing boats, jet skis, kayaks/paddleboards, canoes/non-motors, paddleboats, and sailboats. There were nine fewer speed boats, eight fewer fishing boats, seven less jet skis, 63 less kayaks/paddleboards, eight less canoes/non-motors, six less paddleboats, and one less sailboat. There was also a decrease in swim rafts/mats, with 25 observed this year compared to 30 observed in 2025. We saw 118 kayaks and 33 paddleboards, although in the past they have been counted together.

Only one category saw an increase, and that was pontoon boats. There was one additional pontoon boat in Lake Ripley compared to 2024.

In total there were 575 vessels recorded on the lake, which is eighty-seven less vessels than the 2024 boat census survey! (Swim rafts/mats were not included in the referenced number as they are not vessels.) The biggest decrease we saw this year was the 63 less kayaks/paddleboards.



## BOAT CENSUS SURVEY COMPARISON



### Discussion

The District completes this boat census survey every year to document the change in motorboat activity on Lake Ripley. The data varies each year, with our one relatively consistent trend being broken this year. For the last four years, our kayaks/paddleboards numbers have continuously increased, but this year we saw a decrease in their numbers. We saw 63 less kayaks/paddleboards this year! Coincidentally, we did see roughly 10 kayaks/paddleboards

being used on the lake during our survey, that made their way back to a pier – which otherwise would likely have ended up in our overall total.

Lake Ripley saw a decrease in total vessels on the lake this year by a total of 87 vessels. This number seems to be closer to our lake’s average. Last year’s total vessel number was significantly higher than what we have seen in the past, with a total of 662 vessels. That was the highest number of vessels that we have recorded on Lake Ripley. A couple of hypotheses we had was the number of vessels was so high because 1) we surveyed later in the year, and 2) we had a cold spring that everyone was taking advantage of the warmer weather later in the season.

This is the lowest amount of vessels we have seen on Lake Ripley since 2019!

