

Mike Bauer

1. BACKGROUND: Please provide your background and qualifications. Explain any experience you have had with enforcement on waterways, and describe your familiarity with the policing issues the Sheriffs Department is facing on our lakes and river.

I joined LA Sheriff at age 19 as a "detention officer" in 1969; a Deputy at 21, "honor cadet" in the Academy, assigned Lennox Station (MDR) and the Sheriff's Information Bureau. I was promoted Sergeant at age 25, Lieutenant at 35, and in 1997 Captain of Special Enforcement and Aero Bureaus. At Marina Del Rey Harbor operation, and at Aero/SEB's Air5 Sikorsky mountain and swift water rescue operations, I became familiar with on-water law enforcement. * During 8 years living above the Carlin Bay docks, I have observed many Kootenai Sheriff marine enforcements and East Side Fire water deployments.

2. PERSONNEL: The incumbent sheriff believes that the lack of qualified deputies, not budget, is the primary obstacle for adequately policing our lakes. Do you agree with his assessment?
-What is your plan to find and hire qualified candidates? What is your position on School Resource officers and/or trained volunteers similar to the Citizen Marine Patrol to supplement deputies' activities on the waterways?

Partly agree with Ben and Dan. Managing limited personnel under tight budget restrictions is a challenge for Sheriff Wolfinger and improving current performance in water based law enforcement will be difficult for the new Sheriff. I believe if "liability" and "worker's compensation" issues can be contained, there is no reason why trained volunteers cannot supplement law enforcement in providing additional presence, and in giving warnings and distributing safety equipment to water users. Safety education should be the emphasis, not revenue. It is hard to imagine that finding personnel to work on the water could be that difficult for Recruitment folks. Job rotation might help, as you suggest.

3. USER CONFLICTS: What do you see as the Sheriff Department's role in managing conflicts between waterway user groups? Excessive boat wakes and reckless boaters can pose a danger and prevent the enjoyable use of small boats, paddle boarders, kayakers, swimmers, and fishermen. How would you promote understanding between these groups?

"Quiet Enjoyment" of our environment is a goal that is difficult to achieve in water-oriented living areas because access is hard to manage, thus creating conflict in use. In this particular water-oriented "land planning" situation, we see that closer is not always better. Generally, jackasses need to be stopped and invited to not come back. That is the age old problem with conflict resolution, somebody always feels like they were abused. Marine Enforcement is the stick, let's try to find the carrot.

4. EDUCATION: Would you be in favor of mandatory boater education for all new boat owners in Kootenai County and for current drivers 18 years old and younger?

Not at this time. This County is mostly populated with freedom-loving people who came here for less regulation, not more. On the water education, by the scruff of the neck if necessary, is my idea of educating water users, with many more warnings issued than citations, and more enforcement vessels in view to discourage abuse. Your "volunteer" idea would help.

5. INCREASE IN BOATERS FEES: Would you support an increase in county boater fees to fund enforcement and education? Would you support a fee for out of state boaters? How would that fee be collected and enforced? How would those fees be used?

I am not confident the fees would go to the purpose they were intended. Sorry, that is just how I feel about these new or increased fees. I have seen government swell to fill its budget. However

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if fees are increased, take a look at float plane use, since it has happened to crash and flip over locally in the past, causing interesting environmental concerns.

6. RE-ENTRY FACILITY: Although details have not been finalized, given what you know about re-entry centers, what is your position about having one located in Kootenai County? What impacts do you foresee for the Sheriff's Department and the general population?

This issue is one I would refer to the voters. The Governor has insinuated that IDOC will put one up here, and the BOCC is struggling themselves how to stop it. The new Sheriff would be better off not starting off in conflict with Boise on this issue and instead let the voters have their say. I would insist on electronic monitoring of any prisoner in our area, at IDOC expense, and a "search and seizure" waiver on all such prisoners so they can be stopped at any time for any reason and searched by city and county law enforcement. Then I would steal their trained and background-checked IDOC employees to be Kootenai County Deputies and Detention Officers, to fill our vacancies. That is how you make lemonade.

7. TRAFFIC ISSUES: How would you address the issues of speeding and dangerous parking on the narrow and congested roadways around the lakes and river? Many of the roads were not designed to accommodate boater volumes, excessive speeds or on-street parking.

Patrol and parked vacant patrol cars. Run a little radar and see if the message doesn't get across. Your municipality and your road departments can sign these places for the compliant folks. The rest, enforcement.

8. EXCESSIVE WAKES: Kootenai County Regulations specify a "NO WAKE ZONE" for lakes within 200 feet of shoreline, dock, pier, breakwater, or person in the water. Do you believe excessive or illegal wakes can be determined by sight? Would you support your marine deputies to estimate an excessive wake by sight? How would your deputies enforce existing regulations?

Estimating wake height for evidence in court prosecution is subject to the prosecutor and the court's standards of evidence. If the court will accept estimates, we should give a class on estimating wake sizes and invite the opponents of such regulation to witness the process. As in pornography, we cannot describe it, but we know what it looks like when we see it.

SUMMARY:

Let us assume that these important issues have been the subject of years of debate, argument and disagreement. Let us also consider that some very good men and women of the Kootenai County Sheriff's Department have been trying to manage these concerns for better or worse. No new Sheriff should undertake to promise relief for you without spending time for the rest of the year with Ben Wolfinger and Dan Mattos to get an education on your issues, from their perspective. Besides, you'all are paying a couple hundred thousand dollars a year for their advice, as we speak.

I look forward to a spirited discussion on ZOOM !

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