

# LBI wakeboarders head east for smoother waters on Delaware

■ New Jersey Wakefest, held last Saturday on the Delaware River, has grown dramatically since it started last year.

By JON COEN  
For The Press

It began as a post on an Internet message board. But by last Saturday, it had grown into quite an event.

Pro wakeboard riders, wake companies, dozens of boats, marina teams, and more than 300 wakeboarders from Virginia Beach, Va., to Boston were enjoying the smooth water of the Delaware River at the New Jersey Wakefest. And it was all made possible by southern New Jersey shore riders.

"It all started on wake-world.com. There was a post on the forum for New Jersey riders getting together. It started a discussion about the people who ride salt water meeting up with the people who ride fresh water," said Alex Kinon, of Stafford Township. "It's an East Coast meets the West Coast of New Jersey event, to bring everyone to one spot."

Wakeboarding, a direct descendent of waterskiing, and cousin of surfing, skateboarding and snowboarding, involves being pulled behind a boat on a fiberglass board.

When the topic thread on the wakeworld.com reached 800 posts last year, Kinon took the initiative to turn the online discussion into reality.

Despite rain in 2006, 75 people still came out to the Bordentown boat launch on the Delaware River in Burlington County.

"This year it grew exponentially. The numbers have tripled," Kinon added while handing out wakeboard posters to young riders.

Several wakeboard boats sat



Rick Scatchard of Surf City catches some air off a wake during Wakefest last Saturday. The event was held on the Delaware River near the Bordentown boat launch in Burlington County.

Press photo by David Brelsacher.

anchored in the shallows. Wakeboarders took turns getting pulled, trying out new boards and equipment. A tent village on the shore offered a BBQ, demo boards, and a chance to meet pro riders.

Joe Nero, a 16-year-old summer resident of the Brant Beach section of Long Beach Township and employee/team rider for Island Surf and Sail, also in Brant Beach, wakeboards the salt water of Barnegat Bay all summer. But on Saturday, he got a taste of fresh water on the Delaware.

Nero, and fellow shop employee, Conner Pyle, 16 of Ship Bottom, supplied the PA

system and generator for Wakefest.

They also toted out Island Surf and Sail's newest toy, The Grinch, a seven-horsepower gas-powered winch that can tow a rider 600 feet across the water without a boat.

"This is an unbelievable event. Seeing all the boats and pro riders is so good for the sport," raved Nero, "and riding in freshwater is cool. There's less chop on the river. Today's conditions are actually perfect."

Professional wakeboarders, Randall Harris of California and Australian Brett Eisenhaur (now of Orlando) came out for

the demos. Getting pulled at 28 miles per hour, they launched some 15 feet above the wake.

Much of the success of Wakefest is due to Jeff Barton. The 37-year-old former editor of Wakeboard Magazine from Moorestown has been riding for 15 years and is the current host of the Mastercraft Pro Wakeboard Tour.

He hung out with the kids, helped in organizing, and stuck some big airs of his own.

"People are meeting each other here. Now there's talk of people going to other riders' lakes or bays to ride. That's what this is all about," he explained.