

From Cottage Life :

The Question

We have a number of dangerously shallow shoals on our lake. Only a couple have any kind of markings. What is the best way to identify shoals? Can anyone do it? —Clare Sullivan, Sharbot Lake, Ont.

The Answer

The best way is with Transport Canada-approved markers and, yup, anyone can do it. According to TC, private buoys “may be placed in Canadian waters as long as they do not interfere with or mislead boaters.” And as long as they follow all the regulations under the *Canada Shipping Act, 2001 Private Buoy Regulations*, which outline, for example, size, construction, and anchoring requirements for buoys. If you don’t do it right, you could be fined up to \$200, or you could be found negligent if your non-legal buoys cause a boating accident. The government helpfully puts all this info in a detailed document called “An Owner’s Guide to Private Buoys”; search for “private buoys” on the [TC website](#) to download a PDF.

We’re all for safe boating, but just because you’re allowed to mark your lake’s hazards doesn’t mean that you should. At least, not by yourself. Marking every hazard on the lake could get complicated and time-consuming. “You don’t just *mark* shoals,” says Eric Stuart, president of the Lake Wahnapiatae Home & Campers Association, who launched the group’s shoal-marking program in 2010. “You have to maintain the buoys.”

Consider getting your lake association on board—many hands make light (well, lighter) work: For example, Lake Wahnapiatae has 55 hazard markers and is divided into 13 zones, with a different individual responsible for each zone. When something goes wrong with a marker (say, it breaks loose), it’s clear who’s in charge of fixing the problem