

## Eastern Regional

Contributed by Steve Rochette  
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The exhilarating sport of barefoot waterskiing is about the closest humans get to walking on water — skiers glide barefoot on the water pulled by a boat moving 40 miles per hour, attempting jumps, tricks and maneuvering laterally through the wake.

It just so happens that Prompton Dam, owned and maintained by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers' Philadelphia District, is one of the best spots for "barefooting" in the region.

On July 19-20, 2013, the American Barefoot Waterski Club held its Eastern Regional Championship at Prompton Dam for the second straight year. Before last year's event, Prompton had not hosted a barefoot waterskiing tournament since 1991.

"Prompton is beyond perfect for this sport," said John G. Martines, a Newton Lake, Penn. resident and one of the tournament organizers. "It's as good a location as we have along the east coast of the United States."

The reasons, Martines explained, have to do with the width of the lake, the nature of the shoreline and the amount of boat traffic. Prompton is narrow and straight, enabling boats to move at the speeds necessary for the sport. The shoreline doesn't have seawalls, bulkheads or other structures that deflect the wake back towards the middle of the lake. And lastly, typically there aren't many other boaters in the water creating additional wake.

More than 30 skiers from seven different states competed in the regional event this year, including males and females of different ages and skill levels.

"We have three basic skill levels — age group, which is an amateur level, open division, which is more intermediate and open pro, which is the highest level in the sport," said Martines, who is the proud father and grandfather of barefoot skiers.

His son, John E., competed in the regional event and helped organize it while his grandson Johnathan is a pro-level barefooter who is set to compete in the national championships in California.

The family tradition started when the elder Martines tried the sport in 1963 as a 16-year old at Crystal Lake in Lackawanna County, Penn. Years later, he no longer competes, but enjoys organizing events such as the regional championship and cheering on his grandson.

Martines was very appreciative of USACE and the Pennsylvania Fish & Boat Commission.

"They've been very supportive and helpful to us," he said. "When we finish the tournament, we leave the grounds and the lake exactly as we found it."

Barefoot waterskiing is the latest example of increased recreation use at Prompton Dam. On June 8-10, the Friends of the Prompton State Park hosted the Pedal & Paddle Festival. More than 928 cars entered the park that weekend for

kayaking, paddleboarding and canoeing on the water.

Prompton State Park includes 26 miles of hiking trails and an 18-hole Frisbee golf course. Prompton Dam has prevented more than \$23 million in damages since its construction in 1960. It was built in response to severe floods on the Lackawaxen River in 1936, 1942 and 1955.