



The Federation of Vermont Lakes and Ponds, Inc.
P.O. Box 766
Montpelier, VT 05601
www.vermontlakes.org

Use of Public Waters Rules – Regulation of Wake Sports

Testimony to the Legislative Committee on Administrative Rulemaking

February 1, 2024

Pat Suozzi, President, Federation of Vermont Lakes and Ponds

The Federation of Vermont Lakes and Ponds is a coalition of volunteer lake associations and individuals. For over 50 years, the Federation has been the only statewide organization representing volunteer lake associations and supporting their work of lake protection through education, outreach, and advocacy.

The Federation applauds the work that the petitioners and the Agency of Natural Resources have done in creating this rule to regulate wake sports. We have long urged the Agency to implement such a rule to protect the fragile ecosystems of Vermont's public waters and to ensure the safety of all users of those public waters. We are pleased that at long last we are nearing implementation. Although this rule does not include the larger lake shore buffer that we and many others recommended, we are here today to urge its approval and immediate implementation.

This rule as currently written, though not perfect, is an important step forward in protecting the state's public waters and protecting lake users. The 500 foot buffer will remove wake sport activity from most of the state's lakes. In addition, this rule will limit the areas of those lakes where wake sports are allowed to zones with adequate depth and it will help to reduce the potential for these boats to further spread aquatic invasive species through the home lake rule and the stringent requirements for decontamination.

While we recommended a larger shoreline buffer as a precautionary measure in anticipation of larger wake boats that generate much larger waves than those tested in the published scientific studies, we feel that implementation of this rule now is a top priority.

Currently, wake sports can take place on a large majority of lakes or ponds in the state no matter their depth or size. When they do so, they can cause serious harm to the aquatic ecosystems and present safety hazards to all other users of those waters. In addition, without the home lake rule, these boats can easily transport invasives due to the difficulty of completely draining their ballast tanks.

*To preserve and protect Vermont's lakes, ponds, and their watersheds
for the benefit of this and future generations.*

Revising the rule at this point would further delay its implementation. Given that we are months away from the beginning of the boating season, any further delay in implementing a rule will allow wake sports to continue to spread damage and safety risks.

This rule will be the first of its kind in the nation, making Vermont a leader in this type of lake protection and will provide a model for other states as they seek ways to protect their lakes.

The state's highest priority should be the protection of Vermont's precious water resources and the safety of the public using those waters. To this end, we urge you to approve this rule and order its immediate implementation for the 2024 summer season.

