

Statement to be read at LARC hearing on 02/01/2024

23-P17/Vermont Use of Public Waters Rules

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Canoeist, photographer, and Vice President of the Friends of Waterbury Reservoir

In 2023 there were approximately 107 pairs of nesting loons on Vermont lakes, an amazing number and indicative of the successful recovery of this iconic bird in our state. In 2019, the first documented pair of loons nesting on Waterbury Reservoir was seen, which led to a dedicated recovery effort. In the past 5 years we have built a loon raft, documented and monitored nests and birds, provided warning signs and posters, and educated the public on how to respect and help the loons. In 2023 we had the first documented case of the pair actually laying an egg. The birds are making progress towards hatching baby loons, due in part to all our hard work, efforts, and the support from the Vermont Center for Ecostudies.

The presence of wake surfing boats, and the resulting waves, noise, and disruption of aquatic environment pose a threat to our loons (and those on any lakes in Vermont). A nest that is flooded or swamped will be a failed nest, and no new loons will be hatched that year. The disruption of shoreline habitat also poses dangers to the loons, as well as the herons, eagles, and other wildlife that frequent and feed in the shoreline areas. ‘

Vermont VCE loon biologist Eric Hanson has stated that he sees a need for a 1000 foot regulation, due to the probable negative effects on nesting and aquatic habitat if a 500 foot rule exists.

I canoe over 200 days per year (250 in 2023), with over a third of those days on the Waterbury Reservoir, mostly because of the varied and successful wildlife I can observe. It would be a shame if others lost that opportunity on this lake, as well as others in Vermont, due to the presence of wake surfing boats.

Thank you for your time.