

To The Legislative Committee on Administrative Rules

May 11, 2026

My name is Steve Sease and I am a resident of Montpelier, Vermont. I'm nearing 80 years old, and I have been paddling on Vermont's lakes, ponds and rivers for more than 50 years in canoes and kayaks. I'm here to support the proposed rule, as I address below.

I am a day paddler. Like thousands of other small boaters, I car top or trailer my boat to a lake of my choice for an outing on the water. Because I do not have a lakeside camp, these outings take planning and logistical thinking.

The proposed rule goes a long way toward addressing safety issues for small boaters like me, and its effect will be to remove a dozen or more lakes from the inventory of Vermont lakes that might be used by wake boats. That is progress.

Unfortunately, in my view, a number of Vermont lakes would remain available for wake boat use. Several lakes which remain on the list submitted individual petitions to ban wake boats, petitions which were not addressed by the ANR. I hope that those lakes will again submit petitions to ban wake boats, and I foresee that legislative action may be required to address the issue in the future.

Having said that, a separation of 500 feet from an operating wake boat to a canoe, sailboard, or open water swimmer, may – and I emphasize may – be sufficiently far away to be safe. An experienced paddler should be able to safely negotiate the initial wave and succeeding wave chain with skill and luck. I'm not so sure about unskilled paddlers, swimmers, and small children.

And even though the rule represents progress, the proposed rule will have a chilling effect on small boaters on the lakes where wake boats will be permitted. I used to enjoy a big water paddle down the middle of Lake Willoughby on a good day. With the proposed rule, I have no intention of driving to Willoughby on the off chance that no wake boats are operating. The point for me on a lake like Willoughby is to paddle down the middle - not sneak around the perimeter of the lake in a 500 foot "safety zone". And I have no intention of finding out if I could survive the wake of a wake boat in the middle of Lake Willoughby! It's not worth the time and effort to be disappointed by the presence of a wake boat or be scared and having to quickly maneuver with a wave chain coming at me in the middle of a lake.

In summary, I support the proposal, as far as it goes. More work will be need to done on issues such as transport of invasive aquatic species, emerging data on safety and ecological effects, and other attributes of wake boats. This work may well fall to the legislature.

In the meantime, please support the proposed rule for increased safety, well-being, and enjoyment of Vermont's public waters.

Respectfully submitted,
Stephen Sease
Montpelier, Vermont

