



RESPONSIBLE WAKES
for VERMONT LAKES

Senate Natural Resources & Energy

Committee Meeting, May 6, 2025



Photo courtesy of Tom Ward

Responsible Wakes for Vermont Lakes (RWVL) Wakesport Testimony

I greatly appreciate the opportunity to
testify today as I recognize how
exceedingly busy you are!

Jack Widness, Citizen & RWVL Member

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To Begin ...

RWVL's Two Take Away Messages ...



1. Vermont should prohibit wakesports on all inland lakes.
2. An increase DEC funding for aquatic invasive species (AIS) is much needed.



A shout out to Oliver Pierson, DEC's former Watershed Mgr, who guided our group thru the ofte difficult to understand petition process.

Today Over the Next 10 minutes I will ...

- Follow the 4+ year chronology included in the 1-page handout you have.
- Share with you the story of the events during which RWVL has worked to manage wakesports in Vermont.



For you to appreciate some of the adverse impacts of wakesports, I recommend you view the illustration on backside of 1-pg your handout.



For More Information See: responsiblewakes.org

Design, research: Carol Phillips • Layout: arteffects4u@gmail.com • Illustration: www.charlesfloyddesignandillustration.com

What/Who Is Responsible Wakes for Vermont Lakes?

RWVL was formed in March 2021. It includes a diverse group of citizens across the state who are actively engaged in efforts to conserve and manage the resources of Vermont's lakes and ponds. We are active users of Vermont's public waters as boaters, water skiers, paddlers, sailors, anglers, and swimmers.



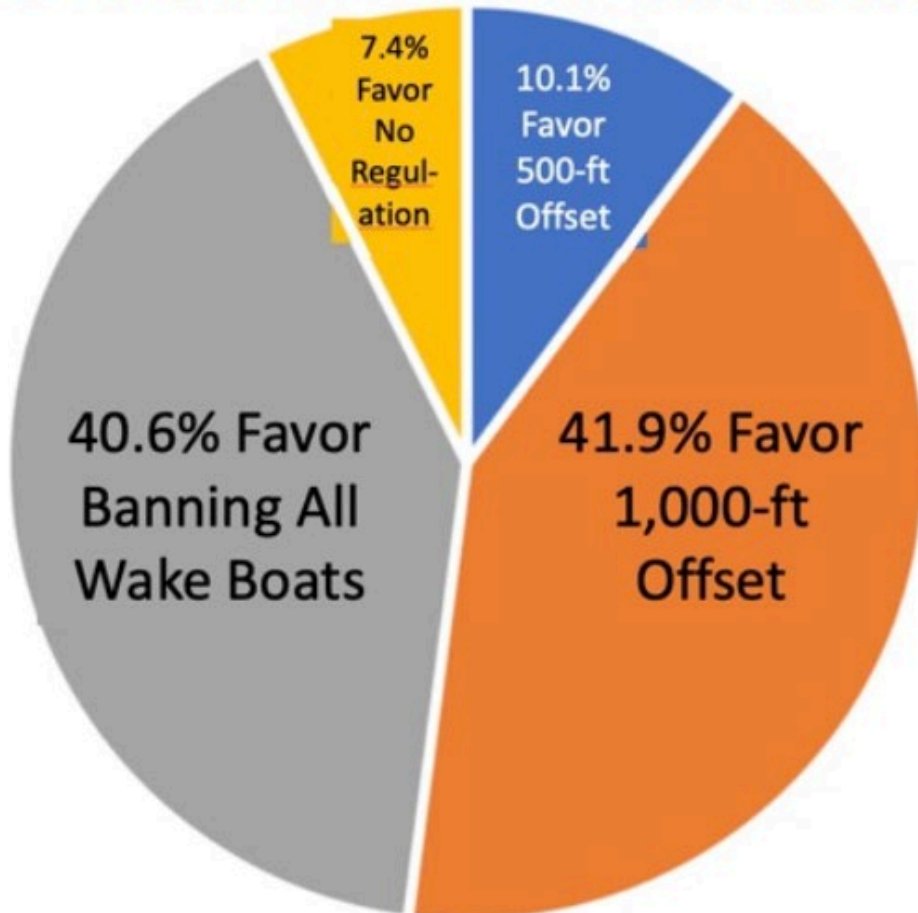
*RWVK members know
and love Vermont lakes.*



*In the past 4+ years RWVL has achieved significant **public support**. Here are two examples from the ANR Rulemaking period.*



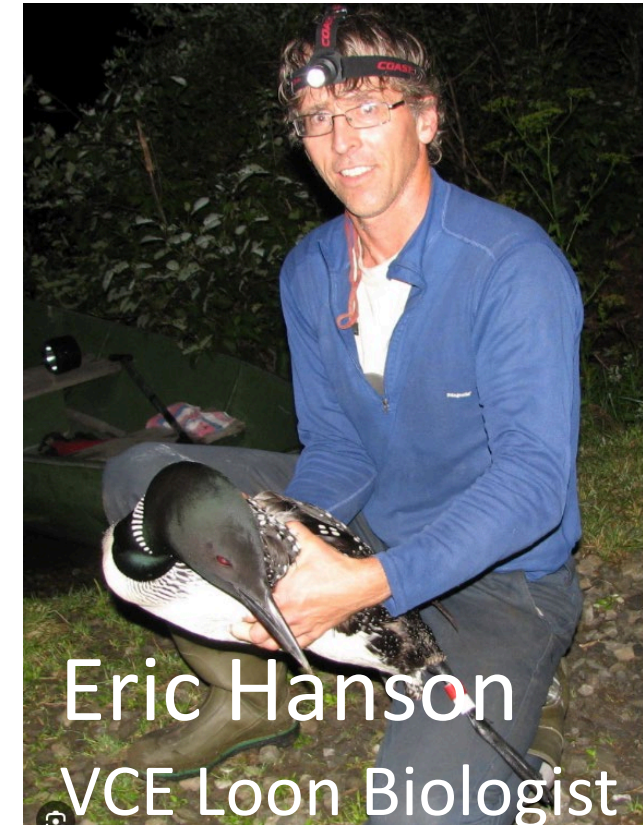
759 Final Public Written Comments



During the Petition Process, we also received strong support from these and other experts.



All of 3 these have commented publicly on the adverse impacts of wakesports on the environment and have recommended the prohibition of wakesports.



Following the Pre-rulemaking period, RWVL's Proposed Use of Public Waters Rule (UPW Rule) Was Largely Accepted, but Modified Somewhat by the ANR for the Rulemaking Phase where:

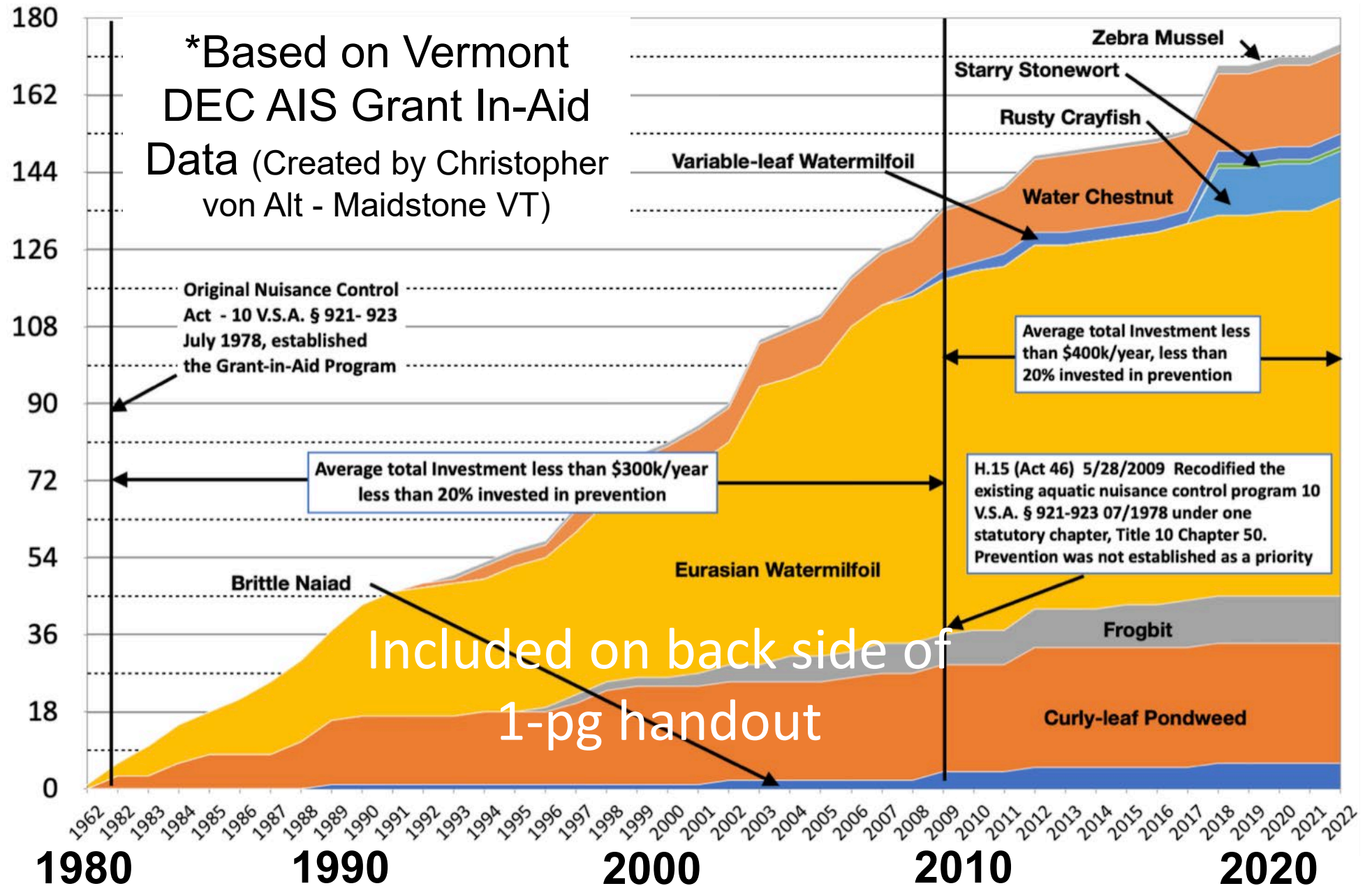


- Wakesports was restricted to “zones” of at least 50 contiguous acres, 500 ft from all shores, and 20 ft deep.
- DEC ADDED the Home Lake Rule requiring wake boat owners to declare a single lake for the season. This is to reduce AIS spread via ballast water. Unlike other boats, wakeboat ballast water *cannot* be completely emptied. In one study the avg residual was 8.5 gallons!

Because of the ballast water, RWVL deemed the risk of AIS spread as the *most* important component of the ANR's UPW Rule.

Historical Increases in AIS Infestation of VT Water Bodies*

Number of AIS
Infestations by Type



Note: Some Water Bodies Are Infected with >1 AIS

ANR Rulemaking Ended with LCAR in Feb 2024 When RWVL Voiced the Following Shortcomings of the DEC Rule:

1. Safety wakesport issues were not consider due to resource limitations (i.e, lack of in-house safety expertise).
2. Public support & RWVL research interpretation for a greater shoreline buffer (RWVL's >1,000 ft — instead of DEC's 500-ft) was dismissed.
3. The impact of “non-normal use” wakesports vs. traditional “normal use” recreation was inadequately addressed.
4. The [Precautionary Principle](#) (do no harm if uncertain) was not applied.

During LCAR, the DEC Provided Repeated Strong Assurances that the ANR Home Lake Rule Would Be Implemented in 2024.

- RWVL *Reluctantly* Agreed to Support the ANR's UPW Rule.



- LCAR sent a Letter to Committees of Jurisdiction with its Concerns: 1) Whether wakesports should be allowed; 2) If allowed, at what distances; 3) Lack of safety considerations.

What Has Happened Post-UPW Rule Enactment on April 15, 2024?



1. 10 lake-specific ANR petitions (11 lakes) were submitted. Each requested the prohibition of all ballasted wakesports. (Eight petitions remain pending for >8 months — seemingly attributable to lack of DEC staff capacity/funding.)
2. The DEC failed to implement the Home Lake Rule in 2024 due to no state-certified decontamination stations & lack of DEC staff capacity/bandwidth.
3. The DEC plans to again delay Home Lake Rule implementation in 2025 for lack of state-certified decontamination stations.
4. The DEC plans to reopen state-wide the 2024 UPW wakesports rulemaking. This is of great concern with no stated scope or timeline. Will the ANR 2024 Home Lake Rule be gutted?

RWVL's Recommendation #1 to Prohibit Wakesports on All Vermont Inland Lakes Will:

1. Protect lake ecosystems and support the vast majority of traditional “normal” lake users by eliminating all adverse impacts of wakesports.
2. Improve public safety by removing high-risk wakesport activity.
3. Strengthen AIS prevention by having no ballasted wakesports activities to possibly introduce and spread AIS, e.g., as may have been a factor in Lake Memphamgog.
4. Support Vermont's tourist economy. The DEC's and RWVL's analyses indicate the economic benefits of wakesport regulation outweigh the costs of no regulation by ten to one.



RWVL's Recommendation #2 Is To Increase DEC Funding



- This will enhance the ability of the DEC staff to continue their all-important environmental stewardship of Vermont inland lakes and ponds.
- Funding can in part come from cost savings due to:
 - No wakesport damage to the environment to repair.
 - Little or no need for wakesport enforcement.
 - No need to create and maintain expensive state-certified stations for wake boat decontamination.

Thus, In Summary:

- 1. Prohibition of wakesports on all inland lakes** will benefit Vermont's environment, public safety & recreational enjoyment, and eco-friendly tourist economy.
- 2. An increase in DEC funding** will allow DEC staff to better carry out their stewardship responsibilities in a timely fashion.



Questions? Comments?



Photo courtesy of Tom Ward

A copy of the slide deck is available by contacting me: john-widness@uiowa.edu