



## *RWVL Testimony for Senate Natural Resources & Energy Committee Meeting, Tuesday, May 6, 2025*

(Presenter: Jack Widness, Citizen & Responsible Wakes Member)

[www.responsiblewakes.org](http://www.responsiblewakes.org)

### **BOTTOM LINE: VERMONT SHOULD PROHIBIT WAKESPORTS ON ALL ITS INLAND LAKES**

#### **Responsible Wakes for Vermont Lakes (RWVL): 4+ Year Effort Toward Effective Wakesports Management**

- RWVL formed in response to the growing threat wakesports pose to Vermont's inland lakes.
- Submitted a formal petition to ANR in March 2022 after extensive research, public input, and stakeholder engagement.
- Participated actively in pre-rulemaking and rulemaking processes.
- Found strong public support in public comments (82% of 759 comments favored wakesport regulation; >1,000 RWVL Newsletter subscribers; and >200 media articles (with <5% opposed).

#### **April 15, 2024: Adoption of ANR/DEC Use of Public Water Rule ([UPW Rule](#))**

- **Wakesports restricted** to zones of at least **50 contiguous acres, 500 ft from all shores, and 20 ft deep.**
- **Home Lake Rule:** Requires wake boat owners to declare a single lake for the season and display a decal—intended to reduce AIS spread via ballast tank water that *cannot* be emptied.
- ANR confirmed during the February 2024 [LCAR meetings](#) that the Home Lake Rule would be implemented in 2024.
- RWVL supported the rule based on this assurance, despite these shortcomings in the Rule:
  1. No safety evaluation due to DEC resource limits.
  2. Research and public input supported greater shoreline buffers (ideally >1,000 ft).
  3. Inadequately addressed impact of “non-normal use” wakesports vs. traditional “normal use” recreation.
  4. Lacked application of the [Precautionary Principle](#).

#### **Inadequate Funding of the ANR/DEC's Wakesport UPW Rule has resulted in implementation Gaps & Current Concerns**

- **Home Lake Rule not implemented** in 2024; no certified wash stations, causing confusion for AIS greeters and concern among lake users.
- **DEC now plans to delay the Home Lake Rule again in 2025.**
- Plans to **reopen wakesports rulemaking** with no defined timeline or scope.
- DEC has failed to respond to **10 lake-specific wakesport petitions**, some pending over a year.

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#### **RWVL Recommendation: Prohibit Wakesports on All Inland Lakes**

- **Protects lake ecosystems** and supports the vast majority of traditional lake users.
- **Improves public safety** by removing high-risk wakesport activity from smaller lakes.
- **Strengthens AIS prevention** by defaulting to a “universal” Home Lake Rule.
- **Supports Vermont's economy** (see [RWVL's and DEC's Economic Impact Analysis](#)) through:
  - Reduced enforcement, volunteer, and lake association fundraising burden.
  - Enhanced environmental reputation for tourism.
  - Maintained or improved shoreline property values.
  - Generated savings by wakesport prohibition, making much needed additional funds available to the ANR to protect Vermont's waters.
- **Focus the ANR in its state stewardship responsibilities** of Vermont's inland lakes.



## Historical Increases in AIS Infestation of VT Water Bodies\*

