

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

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

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)

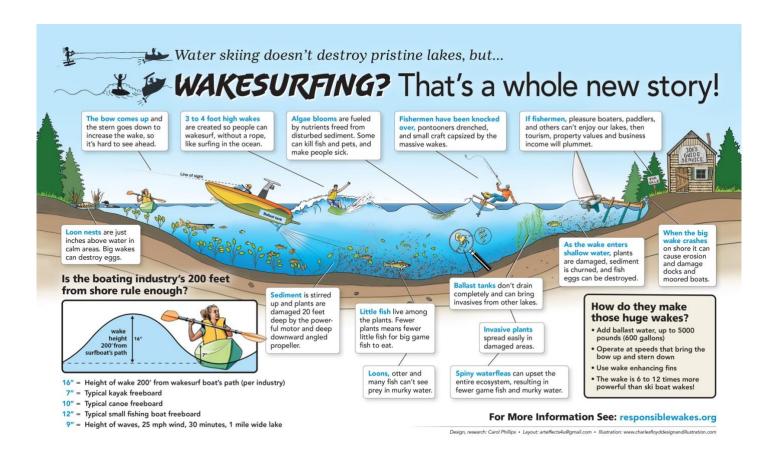
- Wakesports restricted to zones of at least 50 contiguous acres, 500 ft from all shores, and 20 ft deep.
- **Home Lake Rule**: Requires wake boat owners to declare a single lake for the season and display a decal—intended to reduce AIS spread via ballast tank water that *cannot* be emptied.
- ANR confirmed during the February 2024 <u>LCAR meetings</u> 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.

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 <u>RWVL's and DEC's Economic Impact Analysis</u>) through:
 - o Reduced enforcement, volunteer, and lake association fundraising burden.
 - o Enhanced environmental reputation for tourism.
 - o Maintained or improved shoreline property values.
 - o Generated savings by wakesport prohibition, making much needed additional funds
 - o 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*

