

# Minong Town Lakes Committee



**Memo Regarding:**  
**Important update for the proposed wake boat restriction ordinance for lakes within Minong town borders**

**Officers:**

**Harlan Johnson**  
**Richard Johnson**  
**Al Angen**  
**Terry Flaherty**

**Chair**  
**Vice-Chair**  
**Treasurer**  
**Secretary**

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**January 15, 2025**

**To: Minong lake associations, lake liaisons and other key contacts**

The Minong Town Lakes Committee and the Minong Flowage Association has approached the Town of Minong and the Town of Wascott with a proposed local ordinance to restrict the use of wake surfing boats on town lakes. There is renewed attention to this topic because of four extremely detrimental circumstances that occur: lake bottom scouring, excessive shoreline erosion, spread of aquatic invasive species (AIS) and unforeseen boating danger.

The MTLC is spreading the word of this problem and the efforts to prompt local town governments to enact ordinances to restrict wake boat use on shallow and/or small acreage lakes. This is not a new problem, however a growing problem! Starting in 2009, approximately 34 local governments across the state of Wisconsin have passed such ordinances including 15 passed in 2024. Currently there are 35 to 40 more local governments drafting similar ordinances planning to be enacted in 2025 including the local area towns of Wascott, Chicog, Bass Lake, Blaine, Scott and Casey. The MTLC has been fortunate to connect with a non-profit organization "Last Wilderness Alliance" which is headed by a retired attorney who has drafted an ordinance template that we (and many other towns) are using for drafting our ordinance. This template has been successfully used over 30 times in the past few years to enact wake boat restrictions ordinances without fail, without litigation, and with zero reported complaints to any town's law enforcement or Board members.

## **Here's what you need to know.**

1. **Lake bottom damage.** There is factual, undeniable, documented video proof of wake boat damage to lake bottoms. Wake boats operating in stern-weighted wake mode, shoot a powerful thrust down to depths of 25 feet in order to create a 3 to 4 foot wake for wake surfers to ride on a wake board (small surf board) without any tow rope tethered to the boat. In a shallow lake it obliterates every living plant on the bottom.
2. **Shoreline erosion.** Because of the deep wake that is created by the powerful motor, ripple waves from a passing wake boat are still 12" high as they hit the shoreline over 300 feet from the passing boat. These waves erode the lake shorelines at an alarming rate.
3. **Spread of aquatic invasive species (AIS).** Most lake property owners and day boaters know the risk of spreading invasive species from lake to lake when water is not completely drained from a boat. Here in Washburn and Douglas counties, there is a concerted, expensive effort every summer boating season to hire boat launch monitors that inspect each boat being launched and inquire about the other lakes the boat owner has been in. **The problem with wake boats is with the huge water storage tanks** (hundreds of gallons) in the stern used as ballast to lower the stern even more to generate the highest wake possible. It is impossible for the boat owner to completely drain the ballast tanks, pumps, and hoses when moving from lake to lake. Even the wake boat industry admits this and states that the amount of lake water unable to be removed is only about ten gallons. "Only !" Those ten gallons could very easily contain aquatic invasive species (Eurasian Water Milfoil, Zebra mussels, etc.) and will be likely be purged into another lake. This circumvents all boat inspection checks and most certainly will spread AIS.

4. **Boating safety.** It is a fact that a wake boat in stern-weighted wake mode has the bow tilted up at about 20 degrees. Videos and photos clearly show that the driver of the boat **cannot** see the lake straight in front of the boat... they only see the bow of their own boat. This is very dangerous especially on busy lakes and during crowded holiday weekends. There has been one reported boating accident in Wisconsin which involved a wake boat tilted up preventing the driver from seeing the other boat involved. Let it be known that the proposed ordinance does not prohibit all wake boats from boating on the waters of Minong Lakes, it only restricts these boats from operating in the destructive stern-weighted wake enhancement mode. Wake boats simply cruising or pulling skiers and inflatables is certainly allowed.

## YOUR ACTION NEEDED

Please plan to attend the next MTLC quarterly meeting on Saturday January 18<sup>th</sup> at 9:30AM in the Minong Town Hall. (Coffee and donuts at 9:00) The public is invited. The main agenda item is to convey as much of the wake boat ordinance information as possible. After this meeting, there may be requested public action – please attend to find out more.

Please become familiar with the critical need for wake boat restrictions on our local lakes. The MTLC will be distributing more information on the progress of the proposed ordinance and other specific aspects of it in the near future.

For property owners on the north half of the Minong Flowage whose address is Wascott - a very similar yet separate, ordinance is being proposed to the Wascott Town Board at this time as well. You will be able to obtain a different ordinance update from Steve Johnson. But the overall wake boat information remains the same.

If immediate questions arise prior to the informational portion of the MTLC quarterly meeting next Saturday, feel free to contact Harlan Johnson or Steve Johnson at your convenience.

Thank you for your attention to this important matter.



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