



Is Wakesurfing Ruining Your Time on the Water?

Wakesurfing is one of the fastest growing water sports in the country. It's also one of the most profitable. That's why the Water Sports Industry Association (WSIA) is spending money on lobbyists and advertising campaigns to convince you that the lakes belong to everyone and everyone should be able to wakesurf.

Indeed, the lakes do belong to everyone - including the loons, our fisheries, shoreline habitat, other water sports enthusiasts and future generations.

Do you know:

- ✓ Wake surfing boats take on as much as 600 gallons of ballast water in order to create that bow up/stern down condition to produce an artificially enhanced wake up to 4' tall to propel a surfer across the water without a tow rope.
- ✓ It takes 700' for that wake to dissipate to the same size as a wake created by a ski boat.
- ✓ Wake boats operated in depths less than 20' will fire-hose the lake bed, dig up sediment that impairs the water quality and release dangerous nitrates and phosphates that have been laying dormant for years.
- ✓ The wakes from these boats swamp other users of the lake including fishermen, pleasure boaters, kayakers, paddle boarders and swimmers.
- ✓ Filling and emptying ballast tanks and going from lake to lake will eventually lead to aquatic invasive species in your lake.

Some Activities That Are Fun Are Just Not Safe and Are Not Good For Your Lake



Please Don't

If you are having trouble with wakesurfing violations:

- 1) Contact DNR Hotline (800) TIP-WDNR or (800) 847-9367. Callers can remain anonymous.
- 2) Complete an incident report found on the website of the Last Wilderness Alliance and it will be forwarded to the proper authority: www.lastwildernessalliance.org
- 3) Contact the Vilas County Sheriff's Office (715) 479-4441
- 4) Contact your local Constable.

For an extensive library of research and informational material go to www.lastwildernessalliance.org

The Last Wilderness Alliance was established in 2021 as a non-profit organization to advocate for the protection of our natural resources and to support the long-term viability of Wisconsin's northwoods. We are committed to sound environmental practices and the principles of democratic decision-making.

Last Wilderness Alliance is a 501 (c) (4) organization supported solely by donations. To donate go to www.lastwildernessalliance.org or send your contribution to PO Box 265 Presque Isle, WI 54557

Question: *What Are Spiny Waterfleas?*

Answer: A Small Creature Big Enough to Kill a Fishery.

Spiny Waterfleas are crustaceans less than ½” in size, opaque in color and live in open water. They have a single long tail with one to four spines which pack a two fistad deadly whallop to our lakes and fisheries. Their tail spines stick in the throats of small fish making it impossible for these fish to eat and mature into larger fish.

Spiny Waterfleas eat native zooplankton, such as Daphnia, potentially eliminating an important food source for our native fish populations.

Question: *How big of a problem is this?*

Answer: Big!

Introduced through the discharge of cargo ship ballast water, spiny waterfleas were first discovered in the Great Lakes in 1982. In 2003, they were discovered in the Gile Flowage hear Hurley, WI and subsequently have been found in Vilas County in Stormy Lake near Conover (2007), Star Lake (2014), Trout Lake (2014), Ike Walton (2015), and Plum Lake (2019).

According to the UW Department of Limnology, the spiny waterflea population in Lake Mendota in Madison has caused large changes to the aquatic ecosystem there including reduced water clarity.

Question: *What can be done?*

Answer: Prevention. Spiny waterfleas are spread by people moving water-related equipment from an infected lake to an uninfected lake – such as bait buckets, live wells, bilge areas, fishing equipment, anchors, ropes and ballast tanks. Spiny waterflea eggs can resist drying and freezing temperatures.

Most of the equipment noted above can be cleaned, disinfected or dried out. Unfortunately wake surf boats equipped with ballast tanks are most commonly manufactured such that they are not accessible for cleaning or disinfecting and cannot be emptied completely of water.

Question: *Will your lake be next?*

Answer: You can reduce the odds of your lake being the next body of water to be infected by spiny water fleas by making sure that you inspect and clean all of your water-related equipment when you move from one body of water to another and **NEVER** move a wake surfing boat from an infected body of water to any other body of water as these boats can not be fully cleaned.

Hazardous Wake Task Force Answers Requests for Information

Jeff Meessmann, Chair, LWA Hazardous Wake Task Force

Over the past two years the LWA Hazardous Wake Task Force has conducted 22 programs around the state on the environmental and safety hazards of wake surfing. Seven more presentations are scheduled for July 2023. Audiences have included town boards, lake associations, sanitation districts, the DNR Natural Resources Board and representatives from the offices of Wis. Assemblyman Rob Swearingen and Wis. State Senator Mary Felzkowski.

In March, more than 100 people representing various towns and governments gathered at the Boulder Junction Community Center. This workshop included information on how to draft a local ordinance, compiling a condition report as required by the DNR, sample signage and other pertinent information.

While most of these programs have been conducted in northern Wisconsin communities, LWA has responded to invitations from Manitowoc County and Tomahawk, WI. As a result of these presentations, a number of these communities have started down the path of drafting wake surfing regulations.

If your organization is interested in either a presentation on hazardous wakes and/or information about how to draft a local ordinance, please contact Last Wilderness Alliance at lastwildernessalliance@gmail.org. If you wish to view a sample educational presentation visit <https://youtu.be/tpD8-75vB1Y>. The LWA website has an extensive library of information at www.lastwildernessalliance.org

Wisconsin Conservation Congress Citizen Resolution Results

Jeff Meessmann, Chair, LWA Hazardous Wake Task Force

The Wisconsin Conservation Congress (WCC) is the citizen conduit to the Department of Natural Resources and Natural Resources Board. Every year the WCC conducts a citizen resolution survey.

The Last Wilderness Alliance Hazardous Wake Task Force submitted six wake boat resolutions in 2022 and five new wake boat resolutions in 2023.

Below is a summary of the WCC citizen resolutions.

Distance from shore and other watercraft

– Current studies suggest that generation of intentionally magnified wakes used for wake surfing be a minimum distance of 700 feet from shore and other watercraft.

Water depth – Because of the downward prop wash and energy required to generate an intentionally magnified wake for wake surfing a minimum water depth of 20 feet should be required.

Invasives – Ballast tanks cannot be fully emptied or inspected. Ballasted watercraft should not be permitted to be moved between lakes unless the ballast tanks have been inspected and decontaminated.

Pre-emption of the lake – There should be a minimum lake size for wake surfing of 1500 acres. Wisconsin has 77 lakes over 1500 acres. It would be fine to use wake surf boats on smaller lakes, provided they are not operating in ballasted, transition mode and not harming shorelines or other recreational users.

The 2022 series of citizen resolutions were approved by a margin of 79-94%. The 2023 series of resolutions were approved by a margin of approximately 2 to 1

For specific citizen resolution results go to www.dnr.wisconsin.gov and search 2023 WCC results.

The LWA is supported entirely by donations from our supporters. This past year has been one of many hours of labor and financial commitment to protect our lakes and lands from the effects of hazardous wakes and ATV/UTV routes in communities where the property owners do not want them. Your financial support helps us to take on these threats. We realize that there are many worthy causes to support and we hope that the Last Wilderness Alliance will be one that you choose to support. Thank you in advance for your support and encouragement.

You may contribute on-line at www.lastwildernessalliance.org or by sending a check to Last Wilderness Alliance PO Box 265 Presque Isle, WI 54557

What's Happening with ATV/UTV's

Steve Halverson, LWA Board Member, Boulder Junction

ATV proponents' press for trails has calmed down a bit since the Vilas County Board voted solidly against opening County Highways for ATV routes in towns that do not want them. ATV proponents, however, have not given up on their intent to open up roads in all towns in our area, but the struggle is now clearly in the hands of each local Town Board.

Neither the county nor the DNR will support ATV trails or routes against local preferences. In addition, the default position from the state is that ATV traffic is not allowed on public roads. The state almost always agrees to allow ATV traffic if localities make the request, but it is not necessary to pass an ordinance against ATVs to keep them out.

Recent Town Board activity in St Germain is of great concern as the Board recently approved a request from the local ATV Club to allow ATV's on all town roads.

Here is what is happening in other communities:

Boulder Junction – The town board elected in April is unchanged in membership from the previous town board. This group voted 2-1 to keep ATVs off public roads and other properties and it is not expected that they will change their minds. It does appear that at least one member of the Town Board will step down in 2025 and ATV proponents will be seeking sympathetic candidates.

Last year a counter placed at the Heart of Vilas Bike Trail Bridge near the intersection of Highways H & K indicated 30,000+ passages during the summer. This has helped to confirm the tourism benefits of

that bike trail. It also encouraged the approval of three additional counters which have been placed on that trail.

Lac du Flambeau – Respondents to a recent referendum solidly defeated a proposal to allow ATV/UTV routes (on roads) or trails (off-road). It appears there is little likelihood of the issue coming up again in the near future.

Manitowish Waters – The April election brought a new member to the Town Board who is expected to favor ATV access. However, the two re-elected incumbents will likely maintain their opposition.

Plum Lake – Town Chair Will Maines was defeated in the April election. He had advocated for conditionally allowing only one trail to access several local businesses but was strongly opposed to any other trails. The Board member change may foreshadow more trails in Plum Lake.

Presque Isle – There are no off-road ATV/UTV trails, but ATV's are allowed on all town and county roads in PI today. The Town Board has not signaled any interest in making any changes to that situation.

Winchester – Just before the April 2021 election, the Town Board voted to allow ATVs on all Winchester town roads despite reporting in the same town meeting that respondents opposed that move. The Town Board elected a month later revoked that in a 3-0 vote. The results of the April 2023 election and an appointment to fill a recent resignation are expected to maintain the status quo.

Did You Know?

AI Drum

ATV access: There are more than 511 miles of Town Roads in Vilas County. (Two of the nine towns did NOT reply to this question). There are an additional 90 miles of County Roads available for ATVs in all nine Towns. There are 26 miles of Vilas County Forest Roads available and 45 miles of Vilas County Park trails.

TOTAL: 672 Miles of public ATV access in Vilas County (two towns did not reply).

Snowmobile access:

TOTAL: 700 miles public trails in Vilas County

Bike access: Vilas County reports a total of 260 miles of public bike trails. Additionally there are 150 miles of public road routes.

TOTAL: 410 miles of public trails and road routes in Vilas County.

Hazardous Wakes: Community Update

Richard Phillips

Winchester – On June 17, the Town of Winchester convened a public meeting regarding wake surfing. Winchester resident Gary Engstrom provided an excellent presentation on the environmental and safety issues presented by wake surfing. The presentation made the point that existing Wisconsin law does not provide any effective restrictions on wake surfing and it appears to be left to local towns to establish local ordinances appropriate for local conditions and concerns.

In a lengthy comment period following the presentation, a number of residents spoke for and against Winchester establishing a wake surfing ordinance. The comment session was handled very effectively by the Winchester Town Board, maintaining a constructive exchange of views. Several wake surf boat owners made the point that the vast majority of wake surfing is conducted by responsible people who are attentive to environmental and safety issues.

Winchester residents who own wake surf boats appeared strongly opposed to any ordinance that would in effect forbid wake surfing in Winchester. It did appear that there was an openness to limiting wake surfing to the largest lakes with some depth of operation and distance from shore restrictions.

Manitowish Waters – The Manitowish Waters Town Board considered wake surfing at its June 13 meeting. Based on past Town Board meetings, it appears unlikely Manitowish Waters will consider a local ordinance.

Direct Legislation Update

Richard Phillips

In June 2023 a Wisconsin Intermediate Appellate Court affirmed a February, 2022 ruling of the Vilas County trial court that a group of Presque Isle citizens could not rely on the Wisconsin “Direct Legislation” statute that allows at least 15% of the voters in a Village or City in the last state-wide election to use the provision of Direct Legislation to either enact a proposed ordinance or to place the matter on the next ballot for a vote.

This was a disappointment, as this interpretation of the Direct Legislation statute means that citizens of Wisconsin “Towns” do not have “Direct Legislation” rights and thus have lesser rights than citizens of Wisconsin’s “Villages” and “Cities” - even when these Towns have adopted “Village Powers” - as Presque

In a prior meeting, the Town Board had approved a motion to allow wake surfing advocates to post a sign setting out 10 “recommendations” regarding wake surfing- for example, that it be done at least 200 feet from shore and in water depths exceeding 15 feet, that there be no “repetitive passes” and that music not be excessively loud. At the June 13 meeting, the Town Board considered whether such a sign posting might be taken by the town as an endorsement of wake surfing.

The Manitowish Waters Lakes Association issued its own “best practices” regarding wake surfing at its June 19 meeting. These recommendations include that wake surfing should occur at least 500 feet from docks, the shoreline, or other watercraft and in water depths of at least 15 feet.

Presque Isle – At its July 6 Town Board meeting, the Presque Isle Town Board voted to send a draft wake surfing ordinance to the Wisconsin DNR for review. The draft ordinance would bar wake surfing on all PI lakes, with an exemption for Oxbow Lake where wake surfing would be allowed 300’ from shore and only between the hours of 11:00 am and 3:00 pm.

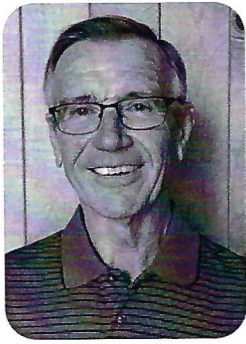
Wisconsin law requires that any town proposing an ordinance regulating boating must provide the DNR a copy of the proposed ordinance at least 60 days before it comes into effect. The Presque Isle Town Board will review the DNR comments together with any other input from the community prior to taking action on the draft ordinance.

Isle did in 1958.

There are 1,250 Towns in Wisconsin. They make up approximately 95% of Wisconsin’s geography and 30% of the state’s population.

The law suit and the rulings at both the trial and appellate court levels do not address the merits of a Hazardous Wake Ordinance. Instead, the sole issue addressed by the courts was whether the citizens of a Town, when it adopts “Village Powers” are entitled to the same Direct Legislation rights enjoyed by citizens of Villages and Cities.

The petitioners intend to file an appeal to the Wisconsin Supreme Court. The LWA agrees with the position of the petitioners.



Letter to our Supporters

Bob Berdan, LWA, Immediate Past President

The Last Wilderness Alliance celebrated its two year anniversary last month. It did so by assembling its founding cabinet members to engage in two intense days of planning our future as an organization. The objective was to create a long range plan that identifies who we are, what we want to become and document what we believe in.

The process, facilitated by an experienced unaffiliated corporate planner, resulted in a mission statement, a vision statement and a statement of our values. Following the creation of these guideposts for the organization, we elected a new Board of Directors to guide us, recommissioned our committees and operational task forces and updated the LWA bylaws to assist the organization during its next 5 years.

In summary, here is the result of all of that hard work:

The Mission of the Last Wilderness Alliance is to advocate for the protection of our natural resources and to support the long-term viability of Wisconsin's northwoods. We are committed to sound environmental practices and the principles of democratic decision-making.

It is our **Vision** to preserve the natural environment of Wisconsin's northwoods for current and future generations.

Our work is guided by our values and commitment to:

- Sound environmental practices
- Education
- Strategic collaborations and alliances
- A clean and healthy natural environment
- Fact and data driven decision making

Our strategic priority for the next five years is to streamline our internal infrastructure to allow for ongoing issue advocacy around the two issues that have been the Last Wilderness Alliance's primary focus since its inception - hazardous wakes and ATV/UTV usage - and to provide education and science-based information to others about these issues.

I trust you will find the details of our efforts, as documented in this newsletter, to be informative and that you will become a frequent visitor to our website (www.lastwildernessalliance.org). We need your assistance and financial support to ensure the success of our efforts.

If you haven't already done so, please sign up on our website to receive our email communications, donate to our cause and become vocal yourself in your community about the proliferation of wake boats and ATVs/UTVs. Thank you for taking the time to learn about our mission and purpose.

Meet the New LWA Officers and Board of Directors - 2023

President – Vacant until further notice.
Treasurer – Richard Phillips
Secretary – Susie Gawriluk
Past President – Bob Berdan

Board Members
 Jeff Meessmann
 Tom Preston
 Tom Olson
 Steve Halverson
 Ann Milne
 John Richter

Thank you to our retiring Founding Members for helping us to get to where we are today. We appreciate all you have done and your continuing involvement with LWA.

Al Eschenbauch Bob Kovar Paul Specht
 Al Drum Jim Olson Nick Williams
 Sue Drum Finn Ryan