FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

October 20, 2025

Wisconsin Wildlife Federation and Partners Advance Balanced, Science-Based Wake-Enhanced Boating Policy

MADISON, Wis. – After months of bipartisan discussions, with lawmakers from both the Assembly and Senate, the Wisconsin Wildlife Federation, along with Lakes at Stake Wisconsin and Wisconsin's Green Fire, reaffirm their support for a balanced, science-based framework to regulate wake-enhanced boating across Wisconsin waters.

This bipartisan coalition supports negotiated terms for legislation establishing a minimum operating distance of 500 feet from shore and a minimum operating depth of 20 feet, while preserving local control for communities to enact stronger protections where needed. This framework reflects both scientific evidence and political realities, ensuring enforceable standards that protect Wisconsin's lakes while maintaining fair access for all recreational users.

"We've spent many months in dialogue with lawmakers on both sides of the aisle to develop a practical solution that respects science and achieves results," said Scott Rolfs at Lakes at Stake. "The 500-foot, 20-foot standard protects our Wisconsin glacial lakes while recognizing the importance of finding middle ground in a fragmented political environment."

Science-Driven Standards

This position is supported by the University of Minnesota's St. Anthony Falls Laboratory 2022 Phase I study and recently released Phase II study, which demonstrate that wakes from wake-surfing boats can cause shoreline erosion and sediment disturbance even when hundreds of feet from shore and at depths greater than 20 feet. These findings underscore the need for scientifically grounded operational limits to reduce ecological damage and user conflicts.

Rejecting the Industry Proposals

The groups firmly oppose the wakeboat industry's 200 or 300-foot proposals, calling them scientifically unsubstantiated and inadequate to protect water quality, wildlife habitat, and property owners. Watch this video to see the impact of wakesurfing waves **generated 200 feet from shore** -> https://youtu.be/qqlKqWpqx4g?si=1Cpc6afQL9TlIClq

And significant **unseen bottom damage** is taking place in waters less than 20 feet deep, as demonstrated by the compelling videos from the University of Minnesota Phase II study. Watch what happens to the lake bottom when a wakeboat in surf mode passes over a bottom camera at 14-foot depths -> https://youtu.be/Y-VZvVGk5Q0?si=q2iWNlIxn_oQKhbE

Preserving Local Control

Our groups reaffirm Wisconsin's long tradition of local governance. Counties, towns, and lake districts must retain the authority to tailor regulations to unique lake conditions, shoreline development, and safety needs. However, **statewide minimums** of 500 feet from shore and 20-foot depth for wakesurfing are badly needed to **protect our glacial lakes** for future generations.

Such **reasonable parameters** still allow for safe enjoyment of wakesurfing on hundreds of Wisconsin lakes while protecting our vulnerable fishing habitat, shorelines and smaller and shallower bodies of water.

Moving Forward

The groups remain committed to collaboration with lawmakers, state agencies, and advocacy partners to advance durable, evidence-based boating policy that safeguards Wisconsin's natural heritage for future generations.

"Our goal is to pass strong, defensible policy that makes Wisconsin's waters healthier and safer for all lake users" Mr. Rolfs concluded.

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