

**Cisco Chain Riparian Owners Association**  
**Guidelines for Wake Surf Boating (WSB) activity on the Cisco Chain**  
**May 16, 2023**

This is a draft report, in summary form. It is meant to be short. This draft report will be revised based on input from the Board of the CCROA and any other interested parties. Any such revisions need to be approved by a majority of the Board Members. There will be a longer report supplementing this document reviewing various studies/reports on this topic. The guidelines presented herein can/will be revised if additional studies are published with different guidelines and a majority of the CCROA Board recognize those reports.

**Recommended Operating Guidelines for WSB operation.**

1. Boats operating in wake-surfing mode, during which boat speed, wave shapers, and/or ballast are used to increase wave height, should operate at least 500 feet from docks or the shoreline, regardless of water depth.
2. Boats operating in wake-surfing mode should operate in water at least 20 feet deep.
3. Boats operating in wake-surfing mode need to be on lakes greater than 500 acres that have a minimum of 50 contiguous acres at a 20ft minimum
4. Ballast tanks should be completely drained prior to transporting the watercraft over land.
5. Regulatory authorities and the boating industry should implement an increased education and outreach campaign that targets wake boat operators to improve awareness and implementation of the best practices listed above.

**Rationale.**

The above recommended operating guidelines come largely from the September 2022 Michigan DNR Review of many recognized studies. The report is written by 4 members of the MDNR Fisheries Division. They performed no actual “in field” research; they reviewed many studies on impacts of watercraft, in general, and WSBs, in particular, noting the increased impact of WSBs on the lake environment.

This MDNR study recommended a minimum of 15ft depth, but cited impacts from WSB propeller wash as deep as 33ft. We chose the 20ft depth figure versus the lowest figure of the range (15 to 33ft).

We also added the recommendation on lake size and contiguous area of 20ft depth minimum. The Wisconsin Conservation Congress Spring 2023 Survey included the question: Do you support prohibiting wake boats from causing hazardous wakes on lakes less than 1,500 acres? 6,292 of 9,171 voters voted “Yes”. The concern on lake size is about ensuring the safety of multiple simultaneous lake users. A WSB can occupy 120 acres of a lake while operating in surf mode. Thus, for a lake the size of, say West Bay Lake at 360 acres, fully one-third of the lake would be occupied by this sole use. This calculation is based on a wake traveling the distance of 500 feet before it reaches a size and strength of a conventional motorboat (say a 18ft fishing boat with a 150hp outboard on plane at 25mph) at 100ft distance (which is Michigan State Law on boat operation). The calculation is (500ft to port + 500ft to starboard) x 5,280ft (1 mile) / 43,560sqft (1 acre) = 121 acres. West Bay Lake is roughly one mile long (north to south) and a half mile wide (east to west) with multiple rock bars at 5-10-15ft.

If WSBs go from lake to lake, we need to make sure that the ballasts are fully emptied to prevent the potential spread of aquatic invasive species (AIS). Ballasts systems are very difficult to fully empty, creating the possibility that gallons of lake water can make it to other lakes. This is a risk for any boat that travels from lake to lake. We also recommend that winterized ballast systems need to be completely flushed.

Lastly, education is always a must for any boating activity. The reputation of any watercraft is based largely on the operator’s responsible or irresponsible use. WSBs are no different here than pontoons, waterski or bass boats, or jet skis. As WSBs are relatively new, user education is a good thing.

We will revisit these guidelines later as other studies emerge and-or state/local laws are enacted.

### **CCROA Thoughts.**

The CCROA is presenting these recommended guidelines because we believe they are consistent with our Mission of *"Promoting Safe Fun on Clean Lakes"*. We have a lake culture of enjoying the natural beauty of our pristine waters and balancing recreation activities with preserving the heritage we have been given. We support the notion that we all have rights to enjoy our property as we see fit, but this desire needs bounds on how we impact our fellow riparian neighbors and the community at large. We strongly believe the entire community, both Watersmeet and Land O'Lakes residents, all benefit from this balance. Our waters bring in strong tourist trade that benefits our stores, hires local tradesmen, and supports all taxable real estate values.

A smart person once told me: "We do not inherit these resources from our forefathers rather we borrow them from our children". What do you want to leave behind?

A lot of resources are spent each year to keep our waters a desirable vacation destination and an enjoyable location in which to live. The ISCCW estimates that in Watersmeet Township and the several border lakes (LVD and the southern part of the Cisco Chain), we all spend a total \$300+k and 3,200 volunteer hours each year. Add into this the resources spent on some of the larger lakes in Land O' Lakes (Black Oak Lake, Big Portage Lake, Forest Lake, ...) and you can probably double those numbers.

We were caught flat-footed in the early 2000s when EWM first appeared on the Cisco Chain. We took no action for several years, hoping it would go away, hoping that it would not become a big deal. We were wrong. I am not blaming anyone for this, I am just saying this should serve as a valuable lesson to us all.

Right now we have approximately 6 families that own/operate WSBs on the Chain. In addition, there may be several more who come in through resort rentals. I believe they are all open to reasonable operational guidelines. We also have an estimated 1,000+ motorized watercraft ranging the full gamut of size and HP class.

We are looking for responsible and reasonable solutions based on data from recognized studies to provide WSB operating guidelines that harmonize our Mission with all recreational users. This is not controversial. Talking to the two dealers in our area (Three Lakes and Eagle River), they recognize that WSBs are different from other watercraft, and they provide advice on operation and education. The national marine boats associations also recognize this fact. The industry segment of WSBs does not want to be stigmatized. So let's work together on this!

You Tube: "A Phased Study of the Water Quality and Wave Propagation Dynamics Currently Impacting A Small Southeast Wisconsin Freshwater Lake: Waukesha WI" 55 minutes.

The lake in the video is North Lake, in northern Waukesha County, WI. 440 acres, 78ft deep. In 2014, there were 3 WSBs; today over 40.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=t3KpNPIGyw0>  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nWm2xxudFSw>