

Town of Land O'Lakes Adopts Ordinance Restricting Wake Enhancement

On May 21, 2025 the Town of Land O'Lakes adopted an ordinance restricting certain artificial wake enhancement.

The ordinance is applicable to waters wholly within the Town of Land O'Lakes and also applies to the Wisconsin waters of the following lakes: Tenderfoot Lake, Big Lake, West Bay Lake, and Mamie Lake.

The ordinance prohibits the use of ballast tanks, water sacks, or wake shaper fins to cause a boat to operate in a bow-high manner, or which increases or enhances a boat's wake. The ordinance also prohibits the operation of any boat in an artificially bow-high manner having the effect of increasing the boat's wake. This prohibition includes continuous operation at transition speed (the speed below planing speed in which a boat is operating in a plowing mode).

The ordinance stipulates that violators shall forfeit \$500 for the first offense and \$1,000 for subsequent offenses within one year.

The Land O'Lakes Town Board's review of this issue was extensive beginning at their meeting December 14 of 2022. The "Hazardous Wakes Issue" appeared on the LOL Plan Commission's agenda nineteen times between February 14, 2023 and January 14, 2025. The Plan Commission approved resolutions recommending that the Board adopt the ordinance on two different occasions.

The proposed ordinance was the primary topic at the LOL Annual Meeting held April 15, 2025. Numerous citizens spoke in favor of the ordinance and asked that it be put on the May 21 Town Board Meeting agenda. Ordinance adoption was on the May 21 agenda and the ordinance passed.

More than 50 WI towns have adopted ordinances restricting enhanced wakes. LOL joins the following Vilas County towns: Winchester, Presque Isle, Plum Lake, Cloverland, Lac du Flambeau, and Boulder Junction.

The Michigan waters of the Cisco Chain are not subject to the new Land O'Lakes ordinance but are subject to the voluntary, unenforceable, guidelines adopted by the CCROA in May, 2023. Those guidelines recommend that the creation of enhanced wakes be limited to waters that are more than 20 feet deep, further than 500 feet from shore, and to lakes greater than 500 acres in size.