

Wake (Ballast) Boats

Enhanced Wakes and Their Impacts on New Hampshire's Lakes

A **wake (ballast) boat** is a boat designed to create **artificially-enhanced wakes** for activities like wakeboarding and wakesurfing. The boats do so by taking on water (ballast) to weigh down and lower the stern of the boat, thus creating a taller wake.



Concerned About Enhanced Wakes?

Join NH LAKES, and several other groups, and support two pieces of legislation being considered by the New Hampshire Legislature in 2021.

House Bill 88 defines “wake surfing” in existing safety legislation.

House Bill 264 defines “wake (ballast) boats” as any boat that is equipped with ballast tanks, bags, compartments, containers, plumbing or similar devices or systems designed to alter or enhance the characteristics of the boat’s wake.

Call, write, or email your legislators. If you need contact information or want to learn more, contact NH LAKES.

Don’t all boats make wakes?

Yes, but wake (ballast) boats are designed to create significantly bigger wakes than other motor boats. Any boat when operated too close to the shoreline can cause damage, but the **enhanced wakes from wake (ballast) boats can be four feet high or more—more than other motor boats.**

So, what’s the problem?

- Wake (ballast) boats have an increased potential for **spreading aquatic invasive plants and animals** than most other motor boats, as ballast compartments are not designed to fully drain.
- The wakes from these boats, when operated in the manner designed to create artificially large wakes, **can do serious harm, damaging shorelines and shoreline property and disturbing the lake bottom sediment which can lead to toxic cyanobacteria blooms.**
- The wakes from these boats are usually big and powerful, **enough to make on-water recreation for others unsafe and unpleasant.**

Is NH LAKES trying to ban wake (ballast) boats?



No. NH LAKES is seeking to inform sound, science-based boater behavior that will establish safe buffers and setbacks for the creation of enhanced wakes on New Hampshire’s lakes—so that everyone can enjoy our lakes, no matter if they wakesurf, wakeboard, canoe, kayak, waterski, swim, or tube.

The New Hampshire Department of Safety has enacted increased setbacks on some lakes for certain boating-related activities, and in some cases, does not permit certain activities in certain areas. **Examining these types of issues for an increasingly popular on-water activity, like wakeboarding and wakesurfing, is not a new approach.**

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Safety Concerns

Now, more than ever, individuals are seeking to get on the lake to have fun and distance themselves from others.

Unfortunately, enhanced wakes often make other activities like swimming, paddling, and sailing difficult, unpleasant, and even unsafe. We believe that there are ways to share the lake, so that everyone can enjoy these public resources in the way they prefer.



Aquatic Invasive Species

The ballast tanks in wake (ballast) boats are particularly hard to clean, drain, and dry. This increases the likelihood of spreading aquatic invasive species from waterbody to waterbody, or within a waterbody, because invasive plants and animals can survive several days in just a few drops of water inside a ballast tank.



Shoreline Erosion & Water Quality

Excessive wakes within a certain distance of the shoreline cause damage to property (like docks and moored boats) and the shoreline.

The lowered stern, powerful engines, and wake action of wake (ballast) boats can churn up nutrient-rich lake bottom sediments, encouraging toxic cyanobacteria blooms that can make people and pets sick.



Importance of Boating in New Hampshire



- The recreational boating industry brings over \$1 billion of revenue into New Hampshire annually which plays an important role in the health of New Hampshire's economy.
- **NH LAKES supports the boating industry and the safe, enjoyable use of New Hampshire's lakes for everyone.** All forms of on-water recreation have become even more important to families during the pandemic, providing family bonding while remaining socially distant from others.
- **NH LAKES is working with many local groups that share concerns about the spread of aquatic invasive species, shoreline erosion, property damage, safety, and support accommodating a multitude of uses on our lakes for all users.**

NH LAKES is the only statewide, member-supported nonprofit organization working to ensure our lakes remain clean and healthy, now and in the future. For more information, visit nhlakes.org, email info@nhlakes.org, or call 603.226.0299.

