

Town of LaFollette
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May 14, 2025

Karen Hyun, Ph.D
Secretary, Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources
101 S. Webster Street PO Box 7921
Madison, WI 53707-7921

Dear Dr. Hyun,

We, the undersigned, are the elected board for the Town of LaFollette located in Burnett County. We are writing to encourage you to direct the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (DNR) to develop uniform rules for the deployment and use of wake enhancing boats.

As the town board, we have been approached by town lake landowners to develop an ordinance to control the use of these watercraft. While Wisconsin statutes and the DNR allow us to develop such an ordinance, it will have little, if any, effect. The DNR has designated that four of the lakes, wholly or partly within our town boundaries, have DNR approved public boat access, making these lakes open to anyone with any type of DNR approved watercraft. Consequently, we cannot control access to these lakes or use of any licensed watercraft.

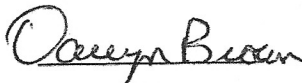
Wake enhancing boats have been of concern throughout the state. Their use has led to at least two Wisconsin State Journal opinion articles (April 13, 2025 and April 20, 2025), the former outlining the need for the DNR to set restrictions on lake size and depth for the use of these watercraft. Even the latter article that took a more favorable view of these watercraft, proposed restrictions on shoreline distance to minimize erosion and damage. There have been several published scientific articles that identify the damage these watercrafts induce to lake bottom, water clarity and the high potential for the transfer of invasive species between water bodies. There is also evidence of disruption of waterfowl nesting and homing choices (e.g., Loons, ducks, swans, etc.) due to the introduction of these watercraft.

We are aware of the lure of these type of watercraft. They provide the ability to ski, surf, wakeboard without the assistance of a traditional tow rope. We also believe that there are water bodies that are well suited for their deployment. Unfortunately, without guidance from the DNR, we are only speculating which lakes are appropriate so that these craft do not inflict irreparable damage to our lakes. We see it as analogous to automobiles: one may purchase any car they want, including high speed sports cars, but just because the car can reach speeds more than 100 mph, the state sets limits on how fast one can drive, whether it be 70 mph on the interstate or 20 mph in a school zone. Should one want to test the maximum potential of their car, there are approved venues for this purpose.

We believe that setting limits on wake enhancing watercraft is the state's responsibility: not a patchwork of ordinances by small towns as is currently underway in our county and state. This patchwork only leads to confusion for boat owners, lake users and towns. We urge you to direct those within the DNR to set guidelines which would be fair to all parties and provide guidance to small towns such as ours.

Thank you for your consideration.

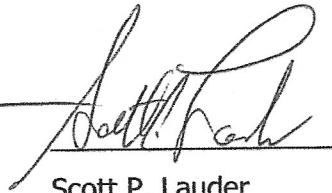
Regards,



Darwyn Brown
Chairman
Town of LaFollette



Mitchell Coyour
Supervisor
Town of LaFollette



Scott P. Lauder
Supervisor
Town of LaFollette