

**WALLOON LAKE ASSOCIATION AND CONSERVANCY PRESS RELEASE
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WLAC Releases Updated Wake Sport Recommendations to Protect Walloon Lake

Walloon Lake, Mich. – Walloon Lake Association and Conservancy (WLAC), the 501(c)3 nonprofit organization dedicated to protecting Walloon Lake and its watershed, has released updated wake sport recommendations aimed at protecting the long-term health of Walloon Lake while ensuring recreational boating can continue responsibly.

As boating activity increases across Northern Michigan, new research and local data highlight the importance of how wake boats, particularly when operating in surf mode, interact with lake ecosystems. While all motorized boats generate waves, wake boats are specifically engineered to create large, powerful wakes, which can have significantly greater impacts both at the shoreline and beneath the water's surface.

"Walloon Lake is meant to be enjoyed," said Laura Morris, WLAC Director of Outreach and Community Engagement. "At the same time, we all share a responsibility to understand how our recreational choices affect water quality, habitat, and shoreline integrity."

Science Driving the Update

Recent research, including a 2025 field study by the University of Minnesota and findings from the Michigan Department of Natural Resources, shows that wake boats can:

- Produce waves with 1.7 to 17 times more energy than typical speed boats
- Generate wakes that travel up to 950 feet before dissipating
- Disturb lakebed sediment in water depths of up to 30 feet, compared to 5 to 10 feet for most boats

These forces can resuspend sediment, release excess nutrients such as phosphorus and nitrogen, disrupt fish spawning areas, and contribute to harmful algal blooms. Importantly, wake boat energy is directed not just outward, but downward into the water column, increasing the likelihood of ecological disturbance even when operating far from shore.

Why It Matters for Walloon Lake

Despite Walloon Lake's deep basins, including areas exceeding 100 feet, the lake's average depth is around 30 feet and its relatively narrow shape limits where wake sports can be conducted safely. These characteristics mean that even well-intentioned boating activity can unintentionally impact the lakebed and shoreline if depth and distance are not carefully considered.

WLAC's 2026 Updated Wake Sport Recommendations on Walloon Lake

To balance recreation with conservation, WLAC recommends the following:

Wake Boats (Surf Mode):

- Operate in "surf mode" only in water deeper than 20 feet
- Maintain a minimum distance of 500 feet from shorelines, docks, and other boats
- Stay as close to the center of the lake as possible
- Reference WLAC's Wake Boat Map for appropriate areas

All Motorized Boats:

- Minimize wakes in water less than 10 feet
- Minimize wakes within 200 feet of shorelines and docks

WLAC has also developed a Wake Boat Map to help boaters identify areas where depth and distance conditions are more appropriate for wake surfing. Even within these areas, boaters are encouraged to remain aware of nearby vessels and shoreline proximity.

"These recommendations are rooted in the best available science," Morris added. "They are designed to be practical for boaters while meaningfully reducing impacts to water quality, aquatic habitat, and shoreline stability."

Learn More

WLAC encourages all lake users to adopt responsible boating practices to help preserve Walloon Lake for future generations.

For more information, to view the Wake Boat Map, or to learn more about responsible wake boating, visit: www.walloon.org/what-we-do/people/safety.

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