

Citizen Resolution # 640123



Ban use of wake boat ballast systems in Presque Isle Township (requires legislation)

Aquatic invasive species were brought to the Great Lakes in cargo ship ballast systems. From there the invasives made their way into many of Wisconsin's inland lakes, often via recreational watercraft. Presque Isle has so far avoided the worst of the invasives, but the township is surrounded by lakes that do have invasives. Also, tourists bring boats from all over the Midwest to enjoy the many lakes.

Current regulations say all boat ballast systems must be completely emptied before leaving boat landings. Wake boat ballast systems are not designed to be completely emptied. Their ballast systems are usually inaccessible and totally enclosed. The State does not enforce their own laws because it is impossible to inspect the ballast systems.

It is evident that manufacturers are aware that ballast systems don't drain completely. Wake boat owners' manuals say to add several gallons of antifreeze to the ballast system in winter to avoid problems from residual water freezing. A University of Wisconsin study has shown that wake boat ballast systems contain on average 8 gallons of residual lake water after "being emptied". The water tested contained zooplankton, some still alive after weeks. When these boats are moved from lake to lake, they transfer residual water and invasives. Zebra mussels, spiny water fleas, Eurasian milfoil, and fish diseases can devastate the lakes.

Pristine lakes are the backbone of Presque Isle's economy; invasives could devastate the township. But managing this problem is far beyond the ability of a small community. Until the State and boat manufacturers develop methods to decontaminate the ballast systems and have the ability to track the boats to be sure all are decontaminated, and have the funding to carry this out, the use of ballast water should be banned in Presque Isle Township.

Would you support the WCC and legislature creating a new statute that prohibits the use of ballast systems on the lakes in Presque Isle Township, Vilas County?

Additional Information provided by author:

University of Wisconsin Study "Volume and contents of residual water in recreational watercraft ballast systems", January 2016, link: <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/306920452>

Article from Outdoor Life, "A spiky flea could ruin Midwestern ecosystems and kill native fish", February 17, 2021, link: <https://www.popsi.com/story/animals/spiny-water-flea/>

Wisconsin regulation NR 19

Wisconsin regulation NR 40

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