

Citizen Resolution # 640523



Wake boat ballast systems violate current Wisconsin regulations.

It has been known since the 1980's that ballast water containing aquatic invasive species was discharged into the St. Lawrence Seaway from European ships. From there the invasives made their way into our Great Lakes and now into Wisconsin's inland lakes. Current regulations state that all boat ballast systems must be completely emptied prior to being removed from the boat landing. Wake boat ballast systems are not designed to be completely emptied. Many of the boat ballast systems are inaccessible and totally enclosed. This makes the systems impossible to inspect and unable to dry because they are enclosed.

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". In some boats as much as 20 gallons remained. The water tested contained zooplankton and, in some cases, it was still alive. When these boats are moved from lake to lake, they transfer the ballast water and its contents from one lake to another lake.

Wake boat ballast systems cannot be completely emptied. Therefore, they can transfer aquatic invasive species such as zebra mussels, spiny water fleas and fish diseases from one lake to another. Wake boats could be used on lakes and rivers for activities such as water skiing, tubing and pleasure cruising but use of the ballast system feature should be prohibited. Would you support the WCC and legislature creating a new statute that prohibits the use of wake boat ballast systems on Wisconsin's lakes and rivers?

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.popsci.com/story/animals/spiny-water-flea/>.

Wisconsin regulation NR 19
Wisconsin regulation NR 40

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