



WAKE BOATS: A THREAT TO THE HEALTH OF OUR LAKES

INTRODUCTION. As you will hear testimony today, wake boats are a threat to the health of our lakes in RI.

ISSUE. *Save the Lakes* (“*STL*”), a non-profit organized to promote the health of Rhode Island’s lake ecosystems, looks to the Rhode Island legislature for help in protecting these lakes and ensuring the sustainability of its natural resources. Rhode Island is blessed with hundreds of freshwater waterbodies, named as lakes, ponds or reservoirs (“lakes”). The Rhode Island DEM Office of Water Resources currently tracks water quality conditions of 237 lakes covering 18,845 acres; *STL* was able to track information on 140 of these lakes. Most of the lakes are considered small - 70% are 50 acres or less with only four lakes exceeding 500 acres. These water bodies offer critical elements of Rhode Island’s environment and its biodiversity, including drinking water, habitats for aquatic life, flood and drought management and recreation.

STL has studied available research, reviewed publications and consulted with riparian owners and other Rhode Island residents regarding wake boats use on lakes. It is clear to *STL* that wake boat use on Rhode Island’s smaller lakes raises profound ecological issues adversely impacting the health of these lakes and their ecosystems.

RECOMMENDATIONS. Finding a balanced solution that meets competing demands surrounding wake boats on lakes is complex and challenging. Not all wake boat waves are equal, and no two lakes are the same. A myriad of factors, including, but not limited to, water depth, the lake’s natural buffers, water quality, sunlight and sequestered contaminations, wave distance from shore, boat type, speed, and water temperature and wind play a role in determining how a boat wake will impact an aquatic ecosystem on any one lake. The solution can be elusive. But based on our research:

1. It is upmost importance to save the lakes in RI
2. Restrict the use of wake boats