

Vermont Finalizes Sweeping Wakesurfing Restrictions, NMMA Voices Opposition

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Late this week, Vermont finalized overreaching changes to its already the nation's strictest statewide wakesurfing rule (500-foot shore offset, 20-foot depth requirement, 50-acre minimum), drastically reducing access from 30 eligible inland lakes to just 18 lakes despite no evidence that the current rule has failed. Most notably, the changes add a 3,000-foot zone requirement, expand minimum lake size to 100 acres, and require 500-foot buffers from swimmers and vessels, restrictions not used in any other state and lacking scientific justification.

The National Marine Manufacturers Association strongly opposes Vermont's final changes to its Use of Public Waters rule, which was already the nation's strictest statewide wakesurfing framework. These changes are arbitrary, unsupported by science, and will reduce wakesurfing access from 30 eligible inland lakes to just 18, despite no evidence that the state's existing 2024 standards created safety or enforcement issues. NMMA supports boater education, preserving and strengthening public access, and following recommendations from state boating safety experts.

The Vermont Agency of Natural Resources(ANR) has not provided a clear scientific, safety, or enforcement basis for adopting these new restrictions, despite being required to make rules using the least restrictive means possible.

State data confirms that wake boats make up less than 1% of the registered recreational boats in Vermont. As Luke Heald noted in an [April 2026 commentary in the Vermont Digger](#) titled “Vermont’s Wakesurfing Rules Restrict the Wrong Lakes”, the new framework “risks appearing disproportionate to the problem it seeks to solve” when restrictions extend beyond areas with documented conflicts. Heald added that Vermonters deserve assurance that changes to public water access are based on “proportional, transparent and carefully targeted decision-making.”

NMMA [supports](#) commonsense, statewide regulations that are consistent, science-based, and fair. NMMA strongly opposes unnecessary bans and overly restrictive local ordinances that create a patchwork of rules, complicating enforcement and undermining equitable public access.

For questions regarding watersports policy, please contact Lauren Hyland, Director of Public Policy and Industry Engagement, at lhyland@nmma.org.