**Legislation Intended to Help Mitigate the Harmful Impact of Wake Boats Introduced to the MI State House of Representatives**



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Introduced by [Michigan State House 41st District Representative Julie Rogers (D) of (Kalamazoo)](https://click.icptrack.com/icp/relay.php?r=40900516&msgid=328634&act=POQH&c=1762391&pid=711075&destination=https%3A%2F%2Fhousedems.com%2Fjulie-rogers%2F&cf=21241&v=e569d80b4b53aa1620d918e7379eacfb6b27d71ff216d234b667c1286288a443), if passed into law, [**MI House Bill 5532**](https://www.legislature.mi.gov/documents/2023-2024/billintroduced/House/pdf/2024-HIB-5532.pdf) would restrict the operation of powerboats operating in wake sport mode in a manner what will help to minimize their risk of endangering swimmers and other passive water resource users, and also help to mitigate their potentially harmful impacts on shorelines, docks, and on fish and wildlife. If passed by both the MI State Senate and House, and signed by Governor Whitmer, the language of House Bill 5532 would restrict the operation of wake boats to distances of 500 feet or more from a shoreline or dock, and to water depths of 20 feet or more.

The introduction of [**MI House Bill 5532**](https://www.legislature.mi.gov/documents/2023-2024/billintroduced/House/pdf/2024-HIB-5532.pdf) on Wednesday, February 28 with bi-partisan support comes in response to the significant findings of [**Michigan Department of Natural Resources Fisheries DIvision Report 37 dated September 2022 and entitled Wake boats: concerns and recommendations related to natural resources management in Michigan waters.**](https://click.icptrack.com/icp/relay.php?r=40900516&msgid=328634&act=POQH&c=1762391&pid=711075&destination=https%3A%2F%2Fmichiganwaterfrontalliance.com%2Fwp-content%2Fuploads%2F2022%2F09%2FMI-DNR-REPORT-37.pdf&cf=21241&v=5f976bbbd2cab60ee92ed8a790c9637d072f819a1af3d0a7c4362e20f87cc831)

Representing a comprehensive scientific literature review, **MI DNR Fisheries Division Report 37** found that wake boats are capable of producing waves possessing 1.7 to 17 times the energy of other comparable-sized powerboats, and that their specially designed propellers are capable of generating enough turbulence to resuspend bottom sediments in water depth of up to 33 feet. The report also found that the exceptionally large waves generated by wake boats take between 225 to 950 feet in order to dissipate to heights and wave energies that are observed only 100–200 feet away from similarly sized conventional watercraft operating at cruising speed.

Readers should know that the leadership of Michigan Waterfront Alliance has been working in close coordination with our Lansing-based lobbying firm Karoub Associates in advocating for the introduction of legislation designed to mitigate the harmful impacts of wake boats for the past two years. Michigan Waterfront Alliance views the introduction of **MI State House Bill 5532**as a significant step in finally enacting a state law that will act to safeguard swimmers, and other passive lake users as well as help to protect the vulnerable freshwater ecosystems of Michigan’s vast treasure of inland lakes.

**Michigan Waterfront Alliance Wake Boat Resolution**

**WHERE AS**, Michigan’s glacier formed landscape is graced with over 11,000 inland lakes; and, the majority of said lakes being defined by healthy freshwater ecosystems as indicated by the existence of clear, sunlight inundated waters, highly beneficial native aquatic plant communities, and diverse populations of invertebrates, fish, amphibians, reptiles, and waterfowl; and

**WHERE AS**, healthy inland lake ecosystems provide a wide array of valuable economic and ecological services that are recognized for the vital role they play in helping to foster and sustain the growth and development of Michigan’s increasingly freshwater resource dependent economy, and culture; and,

**WHERE AS**, one of the most important services that inland lakes provide to millions of Michigan citizens and visitors is the opportunity to engage in popular water‐borne recreational activities such as swimming, fishing, kayaking, canoeing, jet skiing, power boating, and water skiing; and

**WHERE AS**, a dramatic increase in the popularity of enhanced wake dependent water sports that are enabled by wake boats designed for the sole purpose of generating wakes that are defined by kinetic energy levels that greatly exceed those that are produced by wind, and/or conventional watercraft have gained the attention of state and local government officials, law enforcement agencies, and the news media; and, the results of several peer reviewed scientific studies that have explored the physics of the high energy wakes created by wake enhanced boats, and the nature and scope of their potential impact on aquatic ecosystem have demonstrated that the recent surge in the number of wake boats operating on the inland lakes of Michigan are likely responsible for rendering a destructive array of adverse ecological impacts; and, wake boat generated high energy wakes created in-close-proximity to shore, and/or within shallow areas of inland lake basins are not allowed the distance, time, and/or depth necessary for their extraordinarily high kinetic energy levels to dissipate before disturbing vulnerable benthic habitat, and/or having an adverse impact on both natural and developed shorelines; and, the jet engine‐like turbulence generated by the four blade, large diameter propellers of wake boats are capable of scouring lake beds in depths in excess of sixteen feet; and,

**WHERE AS**, wake boats operating in areas of inland lakes defined by depths of less than thirty-three feet are known to induce high volume sediment resuspension that contributes to increases in phytoplankton (algae) production, increased turbidity, decreased water clarity, inhibition of aquatic plant growth, loss of fish habitat, and overall degradation in water quality; and, in addition to causing damage to docked watercraft, piers, and other forms of shoreline infrastructure, high energy wakes generated by wake enhanced watercraft operating within 500 feet of shore are capable of endangering kayakers and swimmers, of rendering significant damage to natural shorelines that serve as a protective buffer, and provide life sustaining habitat for fish, aquatic animals, and waterfowl; and high energy wakes created by wake boats within 500 feet of shore are known to be capable of causing accelerated rates of shoreline erosion that leads to high volume sediment deposition and accumulation that results in degradation of fish spawning habitat, loss of fish foraging habitat, and a significant reduction in the capacity of inland lakes to support diverse recreational opportunities; and, wake boats that are towed from lake‐to‐lake by their owner/operators are equipped with high volume ballast water tanks that significantly increases the risk of introducing new exotic invasive aquatic plant and animal species to unaffected lakes; and,

**WHERE AS**, considering the steadily increasing number of wake boats operating upon the waters of inland lakes, current State of Michigan laws pertaining to the safe operation of watercraft as it applies to the generation of high energy wakes are now outdated; and,

**WHERE AS**, the scientific research-based conclusions of **State of Michigan Department of Natural Resources Fisheries Report 37** entitled **“A Literature Review of Wake Boat Effects on Aquatic Habitat”** dated **July 2023** serves to reaffirm the veracity of the science-based facts that form the basis of this document; and,

**WHERE AS**, Michigan Waterfront Alliance (MWA) is a 501 (C) (4) non‐profit organization dedicated to contributing to the enactment of state laws and natural resource management policies that help preserve, protect, and/or promote long‐term sustainable use of Michigan’s vast treasure of high-quality freshwater resources; and,

NOW THEREFORE BE IT HEREBY RESOLVED THAT the **Michigan Waterfront Alliance** supports the commendations of **MDNR Fisheries Report 37** dated **July 2023** and shall commit to working with the Governor and the legislature of the State of Michigan to promulgate revisions to inland marine operating laws in regards to wake boats in a manner to help ensure the safety of people engaging in passive recreational pursuits such as swimming, kayaking, and fishing, and to further protect the natural shorelines, shoreline property, and vulnerable inland lake ecosystems of this great state.