NEWSLETTER

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14 Mile Watershed Friends and Supporters . . .

Ideas for Protecting Our Lakes and Watershed
This Month's Focus: Rome Lake Rules Updated

In July, the Rome Town Board adopted updates to its lake ordinances to improve safety and protect our lakes.
One of the biggest changes is the new ordinance that prohibits enhanced wakes.

First, before reviewing the change, here's a little bit of history leading to the new rules. Wake boats are specialized power boats that use ballast tanks or other devices to increase displacement and create larger than normal waves for wake surfing or other water recreation. The waves are often 3 feet high and with enough energy to allow a surfer to follow a boat without a tow rope. As the boats have become more widely used in recent years in Wisconsin, complaints have increased over negative ecological and social impacts of the boats, including concerns of shoreline erosion,

damage to underwater vegetation and fish beds, transfer of aquatic invasive species and driving other water users off lakes.

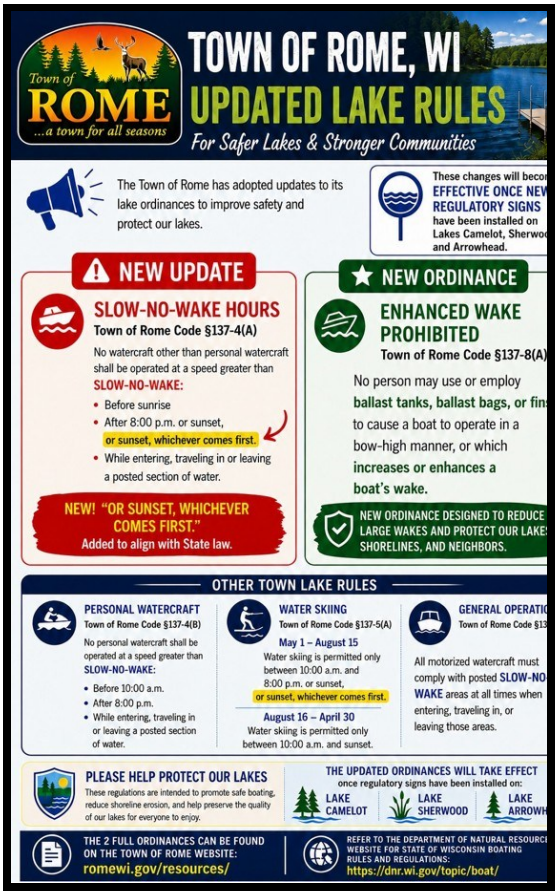
Several lake studies have shown that disturbing the lake bottom increases nutrient availability which can stimulate algae growth. Disturbances reduce water clarity, damage aquatic plant beds which support fish populations and recirculate available heavy metals. These findings are especially pertinent to the Tri-Lakes as they are too narrow in many areas as well as not deep enough to withstand disturbances to the lake bottom.

The Wisconsin State Legislature has discussed the issue, but has declined to pursue a state-wide regulation. Many recreational communities such as Rome have decided to enact local ordinances. With local control, each community can pursue the most appropriate protections for their specific waterbody characteristics and use.

Rome has adopted **Ordinance 26-12: AN ORDINANCE CREATING SECTION 137-8, RESTRICTING CERTAIN ARTIFICIAL WAKE ENHANCEMENT, AND SECTION 137-9, PENALTIES, OF THE TOWN OF ROME CODE OF ORDINANCES**

The ordinance is now in effect as it has been posted at each of the boat landings. ***Some key inclusions of the ordinance are***: 137-8 Certain artificial wake enhancement prohibited A. No person may use or employ ballast tanks, ballast bags, or fins to cause a boat to operate in a bow-high manner, or which increases or enhances a boat's wake. B. No person may operate a boat in an artificially bow-high manner having the effect of increasing the boat's wake. Such prohibited operation includes wake enhancement by use of ballast tanks, ballast bags, or fins, or continuous operation at transition speed (the speed below planing speed in which a boat is operating in plowing mode) and similar methods. For the purpose of this paragraph, "continuous operation" means operation that is not acceleration for the purpose of achieving a state of planing. C. In no event shall any of the following operations be deemed a violation of this section, provided such operations do not use or employ ballast tanks, ballast bags or wake enhancing fins: i) Water skiing ii) Tubing iii) Wakeboarding employing a tow rope iv) Brief transition operation to empty a boat of bilge water v) Brief transition operation of a boat accelerating into a planing condition.

Penalties A. Wisconsin state boating penalties as found in s. 30.80, Wis. Stats., and deposits established in the Uniform Deposit and Bail Schedule established by the Wisconsin Judicial Conferences, are hereby adopted by reference, except all references to fines are amended to forfeitures and all references to imprisonment are deleted. B. To the extent that the penalty for any violation of this article is not provided under Wisconsin state boating penalties as found in s. 30.80, Wis. Stats., any person violating this article shall forfeit $500 for the first offense and $1,000 for the second and subsequent offenses within one year.



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The 14 Mile Watershed Alliance is a nonprofit organization dedicated to the improvement of surface and groundwater in the 14 Mile Creek Watershed in central Wisconsin.
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