

Town of Morris, Connecticut
Hearing and Special Town Meeting
August 28, 2025

Section 1. Authority and Legislative Findings

This ordinance is adopted pursuant to General Statutes Sections 7-148 and 15-136, which permit towns to regulate operation of vessels on any body of water within their territorial limits.

The Town of Morris ("Town") finds there are substantial public safety risks and environmental harms posed by water skiing, wake surfing, wake boarding, and wake boat operation in shallow areas or close to shorelines.

The Town of Morris hereby finds:

- Water skiing, wake boarding, wake surfing, and the generation of large wakes close to shoreline and other vessels are a risk to the safety of people participating in long-established public uses of Bantam Lake, including anchoring or mooring vessels, rowing, paddle boarding, kayaking, canoeing, fishing, and swimming.
- The generation of large wakes close to docking vessels engaged in embarking or debarking passengers creates a public safety risk.
- Participants in long-standing lake activities such as rowing, paddle boarding, kayaking, canoeing, and swimming, are especially vulnerable to large wakes generated nearby.
- Large wakes close to shore and in shallow areas are associated with environmental harms such as damage to native shoreline vegetation, shoreline erosion, and the reduction of water quality.
- There is an increased risk of algae blooms and importation of invasive species associated with wake boat use close to shore and in shallow areas.
- The operation of wake boats in a stem-down manner creates downward propwash that disturbs the bottom of the lake, particularly in shallow areas.

This ordinance regulating wake boating and water skiing areas on Bantam Lake is necessary to protect the public and preserve environmental quality.

Section 2. Amendment to Morris Code of Ordinances

The Morris Code of Ordinances, Chapter 91, "Recreation and Leisure", is hereby amended through the addition of new section 91.05 "Water Skiing, Wake Boarding, and Wake Surfing", as follows:

§ 91.05 WATER SKIING, WAKE BOARDING AND WAKE SURFING

(A) Purpose and Authority:

Whereas there are public safety risks and environmental harms posed by water skiing, wake boat operation, wake boarding, and wake surfing in shallow areas or close to shore, the Town of Morris enacts this regulation to protect the public and safeguard environmental quality on Bantam Lake.

(B) Definitions:

For the purposes of this Section, the following terms, phrases, words and their derivations shall have the meanings stated herein:

(1) "*Wake Boat*" shall mean a vessel employing one or more ballast tanks, weight-loading, hydrofoils, wake shapers, or any other device(s) to artificially enhance or increase its wake.

(2) "*Water Skiing*" shall be as defined in Sec. 15-127 of the General Statutes.

(3) "*Wake Surfing*" shall mean a water sport in which a rider trails behind a boat, riding the boat's wake without being directly pulled by the boat. After getting up on the wake, the participant may ride the steep face below the wave's peak in a fashion similar to surfing.

(4) "*Wake Boarding*" shall mean a towed water sport in which the rider, standing on a wakeboard (a board with foot bindings), is towed behind a motorboat, crossing the boat's wake, and in so crossing may perform aerial maneuvers.

(C) Regulated Activities

(1) On the waters of Bantam Lake, no person shall operate a vessel that is engaged in water skiing within TWO HUNDRED (200) feet of shore except for the purpose of enabling a person engaged in water skiing to take off or land.

(2) On the waters of Bantam Lake, no person shall operate a vessel that is engaged in wake surfing or wake boarding within FIVE HUNDRED (500) feet of shore or of a dock, pier, float or anchored or moored vessel.

(3) On the waters of Bantam Lake, no person shall operate a vessel that is engaged in wake boarding or wake surfing in the area known as South Cove. For the purposes of this subsection, the area known as South Cove shall be all those waters located south of an imaginary line beginning at the easternmost point of Deer Island and running eastwardly to its intersection with the eastern shore of Bantam Lake.

(4) For public information purposes, a map depicting the regulated areas shall be maintained in the Town Clerk's Office for review by the public and shall be posted where the Town posts its rules of conduct for Bantam Lake.

(5) The existing speed limit, slow-no-wake, and boat launch regulations for Nick's Cove and the Morris Boat Launch shall remain in force without impairment by this Ordinance.

(D) Violations and Penalties

Notwithstanding any provision to the contrary in this Chapter, violation of this Section shall result in a \$250.00 fine to the owner or operator of the vessel for each offense. Any such violation which is of a continuing nature shall be deemed a separate violation each time it occurs. Each day a violation continues shall be deemed a new occurrence. After two (2) or more violations, the town may initiate a civil action in Superior Court for injunctive relief and other relief at law and in equity, to prohibit and prevent such violation or violations.

(E) Appeals

Pursuant to Connecticut General Statutes Section 7-152c, any person fined may appeal to the First Selectman, who shall appoint a Hearing Officer to hear the appeal pursuant to Section 10.99(B) of the Morris Code of Ordinances. The notice of appeal must be received in writing and filed with the Town Clerk's Office within ten (10) business days from receipt of the notice of fine. The appeal shall be deemed received by the Town on the first business day following the date it is received by the Town Clerk's Office. Hearing on the appeal before the Hearing Officer shall take place within thirty (30) calendar days from the date of receipt of the notice of appeal. The decision of the Hearing Officer shall be final.

(F) Effectuation

This Ordinance shall take effect pursuant to Section 15-136 of the General Statutes.

(G) Severability

The sections, paragraphs, sentences, clauses and phrases of this Ordinance are severable, and if any phrase, clause, sentence, paragraph or section of this Ordinance shall be declared unlawful by valid judgment or decree of a court of competent jurisdiction, such unlawfulness shall not affect any of the remaining phrases, clauses, sentences, paragraphs and sections of this Ordinance.

Section 3. Approvals

Adopted by Town Meeting: _____, 2025.

Submitted to the Commissioner of Energy and Environmental Protection on _____, 2025.

Approval Received from Commissioner of Energy and Environmental Protection on _____, 2025.

Added to Town Records at Vol. _____ pg. _____ on _____, 2025.

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