TOWN OF MORRIS
SPECIAL TOWN MEETING
NOVEMBER 19, 2026

Ordinance Regulating Wake Boats and Similar Boats, Wake Surfing and Towed Water Sports

I. Authority

This ordinance is enacted pursuant to Sections 15-136 and 7-148(c)(8)(A) of the General Statutes, which permit municipalities to regulate the operation of vessels on bodies of water within their territorial limits, protect the quality of the local natural environment, and ensure public safety. This ordinance is subject to approval by the Commissioner of Energy and Environmental Protection pursuant to Section 15-136(a) of the General Statutes.

II. Amendment to Code

The Code of the Town of Morris, Chapter 91, "Recreation and Leisure", "Bantam Lake", is hereby amended by adding new § 91.05 "Regulations on Wake Boats and Similar Boats, Wake Surfing and Towed Water Sports", as follows:

"§91.05 REGULATION OF WAKE BOATS AND SIMILAR BOATS, WAKE SURFING AND TOWED WATER SPORTS.

(A) Legislative Findings, Purpose, and Authority:

Whereas there are public safety risks and environmental harm posed by wake surfing, wakeboarding and other towed water sports as well as wake boat and other larger boats operating in shallow areas or close to shore, the Town of Morris enacts this ordinance to protect the public and safeguard environmental quality on Bantam Lake.

Whereas, pursuant to Chapter 268 of the Connecticut General Statutes,

"Boating", and related regulations of the Connecticut Department of Energy and Environmental Protection ("DEEP"), operators of vessels are responsible for damage caused by their vessels' wakes. Pursuant to those statutes and regulations, a vessel's wake "shall not be such that it creates a danger or injury to persons or will damage vessels or structures of any kind."

Whereas, in March 2026, a DEEP Draft Wake Boat and Wake Surf Study cited three primary types of regulation for protecting public safety and the environment: (1) distance restrictions from shore and structures, (2) minimum water depth restrictions, and (3) additional regulations or restrictions where limited space is a concern, the Town of Morris has considered those types of regulation as well as enforceability, consistency, environmental objectives, and recreational access concerns in enacting this ordinance.

Now therefore, the purposes of this ordinance are to protect the natural environment in and around the edges of Bantam Lake, to provide for the safety of the public on the waters of Bantam Lake, and to more uniformly regulate the operation of vessels on the waters of 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) "Motorboat" shall have the same meaning as in section 15-127 of the General Statutes.

(2) "South Bay" for the purposes of this subsection, shall be all those waters located south of an imaginary line beginning at the southeasternmost point of Deer Island and running eastwardly to its intersection with the eastern shore of Bantam Lake.

(3) "Surf mode" shall mean the condition when a wake boat is operated in such a manner so as to artificially enhance or increase its wake.

(4) "Vessel" shall have the same meaning as in section 15-127 of the general statutes.

(5) "Wake" shall mean the pattern of waves left behind a vessel as the vessel moves forward and the boat's hull displaces water.

(6) "Wake Boat" shall mean a motorboat designed to create an enhanced wake behind the vessel by employing a specialized hull design, one or more ballast tanks or bags, weight-loading, hydrofoils, wake shapers, wedges, or any other means, device, or combination of devices, to artificially enhance or increase its wake.

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

(8) "Waterski" has the same meaning as provided in section 15-127 of the general statutes, which includes, but is not limited to, both wakeboarding and wake surfing.

(C) Regulated Activities

(1) On the waters of Bantam Lake, no person shall waterski within ONE HUNDRED FIFTY (150) feet of any, dock, pier, float, anchored or moored vessel, or other structure shore except for the purpose of enabling a person or persons to take off or land.

(2) On the waters of Bantam Lake, in South Bay, no person shall operate a vessel that is engaged in wake surfing, and no wake boat shall operate in surf mode.

(3) On the waters of Bantam Lake, outside of South Bay, no person shall operate a vessel that is engaged in wake surfing within FIVE HUNDRED (500) feet of shore, and no wake boat shall operate in surf mode within FIVE HUNDRED (500) feet of shore.

(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."

III. Effective Date

This ordinance shall become effective after approval by the Commissioner of Energy and Environmental Protection pursuant to Section 15-136(a) of the General Statutes and fifteen (15) days after publication pursuant to Sections 7-157(b) and 15-138 of the General Statutes.

Approved by Morris Town Meeting on _____, 2026.

Approved by Commissioner of DEEP on _____, 2026.

Published in the _____ on _____, 2026.