

## **6 - MLR Strategy to address wake surfing issues focuses on science, partnerships and advocacy.**

By Jeff Forester, Executive Director, Minnesota Lakes and Rivers Advocates

In 2019, MLR began receiving reports that large wakes were creating conflicts among different lake users, eroding shoreline, churning up lake sediments and creating other problems. During the pandemic lake based recreation increased dramatically as did the sale of watercraft. Industry data shows that consumers gravitated to the ends of the boat spectrum.

[Sales of large, powerful watercraft like wake surfing boats and small paddle craft like kayaks and paddle boards exploded over 30% in 2020 and 2021.](#)

MLR works to bring together key advocates in the boating, lakes, and rivers communities to seek implementation of a mandatory boater education program for motorized boat operators in Minnesota. In the Land of 10,000 Lakes, we have more than 825,000 registered watercraft, and it is vital to keep users safe on the water and be good stewards of our lakes and rivers.

### **MLR Protects Shorelines from Degradation**

With record levels of recreation participation on those lakes and rivers and streams, it is more important than ever that we protect and maintain the safety and health of our aquatic ecosystems. Through a more formal boater education approach throughout Minnesota, we seek to unite the many stakeholder groups and create a **strong civic partnership** that will provide for recreational enjoyment, public safety, a strong lake-based economy and the long-term health of our waterways.

MLR is advancing a boater's education, testing and certification program to teach boaters why wakes and prop-thrust can put phosphorus and mercury into our lakes, and how to prevent it. This education will be informed by the best available science. We have had a number of productive hearings in the MN House and Senate with DNR, Minnesota Sheriffs, lake associations, boating industry advocacy groups, angling and outdoor recreation groups and marina owners all testifying in support.

If we are successful in convincing the MN Legislature to create a boat operator's certification program, we will be working to create the best possible training program.

**Research Documents the incredible power and energy of large wakes.**

Previously, wake energy and the impacts of large wakes were not well understood. There was little independent peer reviewed science on the power and energy of various wake profiles and the distance wakes must travel to dissipate to harmless levels. If we hoped to educate boaters on the Best Practices to protect our shared resource, we needed a much better understanding of wake dynamics.

In 2020 MLR and partners led a national effort to fund a wake energy study at the fluid dynamics lab at the University of Minnesota's St. Anthony Falls Laboratory within the Science and Engineering Department.

The full report on the findings was issued on Feb. 1, 2022 and will inform the creation of best practices so that boaters know how to operate in a way that does not damage the resource. These Best Practices should inform any boater's education curriculum and certification included in MN's boat operators certification program. You can access the full report and data here:

**[A Field Study of Maximum Wave Height, Total Wave Energy, and Maximum Wave Power Produced by Four Recreational Boats on a Freshwater Lake](https://conservancy.umn.edu/handle/11299/226190)**

**Here's the link: <https://conservancy.umn.edu/handle/11299/226190>**

In pursuing public policy solutions, MLR supports and organizes partners around the best available science. We work to understand the different points of view and concerns of the many stakeholders, use a media strategy to communicate the issues, educate and then organize to advance public policy solutions. Work on this issue will no doubt continue into the future, but there is significant movement towards increasing public safety, reducing user conflicts and protecting our lake ecology.

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