

# Wakeboat ordinance draws comments pro and con

BY TERRELL BOETTCHER  
News Editor

A proposed motorboat wake protection ordinance that would restrict the operation of high-powered "wakeboats" on Sawyer County lakes drew comments pro and con during its first presentation to the county's Land, Water and Forest Resources Committee April 11.

The Sawyer County Lakes Forum approved of the proposed ordinance, which was presented to the committee by Forum representative Phil Nies.

Nies said "wakeboats" are designed to create large wakes more than 50 feet long so people can surf on the waves.

The problem is these wakes travel long distances, damage shorelines and disturb the lakebeds — especially on shallow lakes and channels, Nies said. The ordinance would prohibit operating wakeboats within 700 feet of shorelines, docks, piers, rafts or restricted areas.

Nies said the DNR has reviewed the draft ordinance and "has no objection to getting these boats further from the shore."

Nies said he hasn't presented the ordinance to town boards because "it would take 15 towns doing 15 ordinances." Lakes such as Lac Courte Oreilles fall within more than one town and also include parts of the LCO reservation.

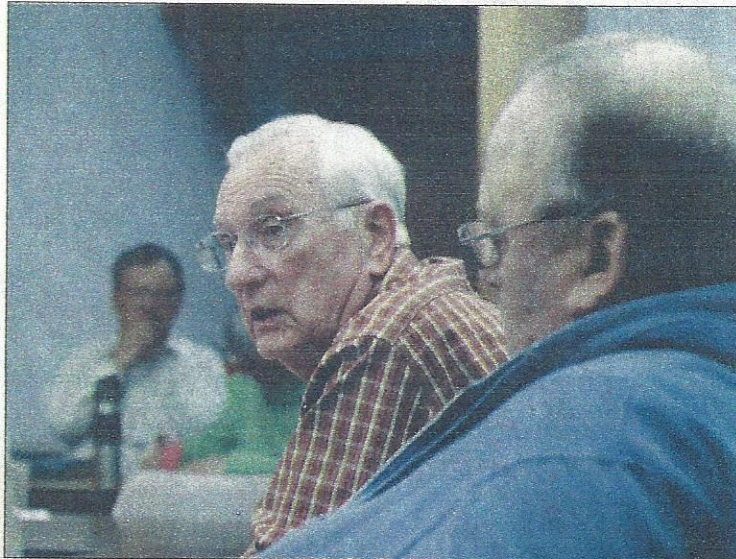


PHOTO BY TERRELL BOETTCHER

**Sawyer County Lakes Forum representative Phil Nies speaks about a proposed wakeboat ordinance at the April 11 meeting of the Sawyer County Land, Water and Forest Resources Committee.**

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”

**Alan Reinemann**  
Round Lake resort owner

Town boards will get a chance to vote on the ordinance and there will be public hearings, Nies added.

Brian Bisonette said LCO conservation staff attribute erosion at two sites to wakeboats and "I think the tribe probably would be in support of this ordinance if it mitigates the erosion problem."

Round Lake resort owner Alan Reinemann said, "We

have a milfoil problem that keeps getting worse because of these jet boats that tear up the milfoil and spread it. We have to pay for it (mitigation) out of our pockets."

Besides having a county ordinance on wakeboats, it would be beneficial for towns to have restrictions on the hours that these watercraft could be oper-

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ated, Reinemann added. "The problem keeps getting worse."

Boaters "go out there and go nuts," Reinemann added. "There's no such thing as peace and quiet while sitting on your dock having coffee when we have jet skis running around. We call them 'water Nazis.'"

Jeff Romsos of Hayward Marine said he owns 300 feet of frontage on Round Lake and he's not opposed to the proposed wakeboat ordinance.

Romsos said he sells the type of boats that create wakes, and it's not true that boats create bigger wakes in shallow water. Rather, the wake drops off in the shallows, he said.

Romsos said that "Wakeboarding is not the problem; it's surfing, where we go 13 to

17 mph behind a boat. As soon as you get off the throttle, the surf diminishes relatively quickly.

"I agree that we need to keep these boats farther away from shore," Romsos said. He suggested a restriction of 500 feet from shore rather than 700 feet, which would allow the boats to be operated on narrower lakes such as Spider Lake, where "there is more surfing going on than any other lake in Sawyer County."

The committee referred the proposed wakeboat ordinance to County Zoning and Conservation Administrator Dale Olson for further development in consultation with the towns association.

Chippewa Flowage resort owner John Dettloff presented copies of a wakeboat ordinance from the City of Thiensville to the committee.