

Whitewater Lake & Rice Lake - Boater Safety Tips



1. Anyone born on or after January 1, 1989 may operate a motorboat only if they have completed a boating safety course accepted by the WI DNR. For more info: <https://dnr.wi.gov>

2. On Fridays, Saturdays, Holidays, and the day before a holiday – slow no wake starts at 7:00 PM or sunset, whichever is earlier. On all other days – slow no wake starts at sunset. Every day of the week – slow no wake goes until 9:00 AM.

3. Slow no wake speed means a speed at which a vessel moves as slowly as possible while still maintaining steering control.

4. You need a wearable life jacket on board your vessel (boat/canoe/kayak/paddleboard) for each person. Plus, for boats larger than 16 feet - a throwable that is immediately accessible.

5. When pulling a skier/tuber/boarder you need to go counterclockwise. There must also be another competent person to act as an observer (recommended) or the vessel must be equipped with a wide-angle rearview mirror. When skiing/tubing/boarding only 2 people may be pulled behind the boat at any time. This means 2 people on one tube or 2 tubes with 1 person each tube.



6. A PWC operator may not tow a person on water skis, tube or other devices unless: (1) the PWC is rated by the manufacturer to accommodate at least 3 people and (2) a competent observer is on board and in a position to observe the person being towed (recommended) or the PWC is equipped with a wide-angle rearview mirror.

7. When skiing/tubing/boarding it is illegal to get within 100 feet of an anchored boat or any Personal Watercraft (PWC).



8. PWCs are not to exceed slow no wake speeds within 200' of shorelines or within 100' of any other watercraft.

9. Never allow passengers to ride on gunwales or seatbacks or outside of protective railings, including the front of a pontoon boat. A sudden turn, stop or start could cause a fall overboard.

10. It is illegal to move a buoy.

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Here are a few highlights from the Wisconsin DNR Boating Laws Handbook – read the entire handbook online: <https://dnr.wisconsin.gov/topic/Boat>

BOATER SAFETY EDUCATION

- Persons required to have successfully completed a boater education course must carry their boater education certificate on board and make it available upon request by a law enforcement officer.

BOATS

- A person born on or after January 1, 1989 and who is 16 years of age or older may operate a motorboat only if they have completed a boating safety course accepted by the WI DNR or is accompanied by another person in the motorboat who is at least 18 years of age and that person holds a valid boating safety certificate or was born before January 1, 1989. For additional age restrictions see a current version of the WI Boating Laws Handbook.
- All vessels (including canoes, kayaks, and paddleboards) must have at least one USCG-approved **wearable** personal flotation device or PFD (life jacket) for each person on board.
- In addition to the above, all vessels 16 feet or more in length (except canoes, kayaks, and paddleboards) must have one USCG-approved **throwable** PFD on board that is immediately accessible.

PWCs

- A person younger than 12 may not operate a Personal Watercraft (PWC). A person 12-15 years old may operate a PWC only if they have completed a boating safety course that is accepted by the WI DNR. (Parental supervision is not a substitute for a boating safety course certificate as with other motorboats.) A person at least 16 years old may operate a PWC only if they have completed a boating safety course that is accepted by the WI DNR. A person born before January 1, 1989 is exempt from the safety course requirement.
- Every person on board a PWC must wear a USCG-approved Type I, II, III or V PFD.
- A PWC may not be operated between sunset & sunrise. A PWC operator must always face forward.
- PWCs shall not exceed slow no wake speeds within 200' of shorelines or within 100' of any other watercraft.

UNLAWFUL OPERATION

- Wisconsin law states that these dangerous operating practices are illegal:
 - Negligent or Reckless operation –
 - Jumping the wake of any vessel that is towing a person on water skis, inner tube, wakeboard, or other similar device.
 - Weaving your vessel through congested waterway traffic.
 - Operating a vessel in a manner that creates hazardous wave or wake conditions while approaching or passing another vessel.
 - Steering toward another object or person in the water and swerving at the last possible moment in order to avoid collision.
 - Never allow passengers to ride on gunwales or seatbacks or outside of protective railings, including the front of a pontoon boat. A sudden turn, stop or start could cause a fall overboard.
 - Improper Speed or Distance – It is illegal to:
 - Operate a vessel repeatedly in a circular manner within 200 feet of another vessel or person in the water.
 - Operate a vessel within 100 feet of the shoreline, any dock, raft, pier, or restricted area on any lake at greater than **slow no wake speed**.
 - Operate a vessel at greater than slow no wake speed within 100 feet of a swimmer unless the vessel is assisting the swimmer.
 - Operate a vessel faster than slow no wake speed within 100 feet of a patrol boat displaying emergency lights.
- **Slow no wake speed means a speed at which a vessel moves as slowly as possible** while still maintaining steerage control.
- It is illegal to move, displace, tamper with, damage or destroy any navigational aid (buoys).
- It is illegal to obstruct a pier, boat ramp or access to any facility.

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Here are a few highlights from the Town of Whitewater Ordinances specific to Whitewater Lake and Rice Lake. A complete list of Ordinances can be found online here:

<https://ecode360.com/32933978>

In addition to adopting all WI state boating laws, the Town of Whitewater ordinances provide for:

“TRAFFIC LANES” and “SLOW NO WAKE”: A traffic lane is established embracing the surface of Whitewater Lake in its entirety, except between the shoreline and 150 feet out from the shoreline. This exception is designated a slow-no-wake area. All channels shall be deemed a slow-no wake area and no boat shall anchor in any channel and no boat shall anchor for a distance of 100 feet in either direction from the tip of the Ridge and the point opposite. NOTE: Beginning in 2022 - there were 4 new Black & White striped channel marker buoys added in this channel.

No pier shall extend further into the lake from the shoreline than 50 feet, no raft shall be anchored or moored where it extends into a traffic lane, no private buoy shall be located in a traffic lane, and no boat shall be moored where it can drift into a traffic lane.

SPEED RESTRICTIONS: All boats shall operate at a slow-no-wake speed after 7:00 p.m. or sunset, whichever is earlier, on Fridays, Saturdays, holidays, and the day preceding a holiday, to 9:00 a.m. the following day. All other days, water skiing and boat wakes will be permitted from 9:00 a.m. until sunset. The maximum speed outside the traffic lane shall be slow-no-wake at all times every day of the week.

WATER SKIING/TUBING/BOARDING, etc:

-Persons operating a boat with skiers, tubers or any other water sport must operate in a counterclockwise pattern in the traffic lane. There must be another competent person on board to act as an observer (recommended) or the vessel must be equipped with a wide-angle rearview mirror.

- No boat towing persons engaged in water skiing, tubing, boarding, aquaplaning or similar activity on any lake shall engage in such activity within 100 feet of any occupied anchored boat, any PWC or marked swimming area or public boat landing.

- No more than 2 tow lines and only 2 persons using said tow lines as a means of water skiing or similar sport: the persons being towed must be wearing a US Coast Guard approved PFD/life jacket. No tow line shall exceed 75 feet in length. This means only 2 people may be towed behind a boat at any time. 2 people on one tube or 2 tubes with one person each – regardless of how many people your tube may hold.

- Towing people on skis, tubes or boards, etc. is prohibited thru the channels.

SWIMMING: Swimming from boats is prohibited unless the boat is anchored, and the swimmers stay within 25 feet of the boat. No person shall swim more than 150 feet from the shore, nor shall any person do any distance swimming unless accompanied by a boat containing a ring buoy or an approved life jacket or similar flotation device and a person trained in life saving techniques. No person shall swim in a traffic lane between sunset and sunrise.

MOORING OF BOATS: No person, firm or corporation shall dock or moor any boat on the waters or along the shores of the lakes for the purpose of living, sleeping, or camping overnight.

PERMITS: No person or corporation shall organize or participate in any event or display upon the surface of the lakes without first obtaining a permit for such activity from the Whitewater Town Board at their regular monthly meeting the second Wednesday of the month. Please call at least 3 business days in advance to get on the agenda.

FISHING: State fishing laws and administrative codes are enforced by the Department of Natural Resources. Fishing licenses, both resident and non-resident and copies of the fishing regulations are available at nearby marinas, bait shops and sporting goods stores in addition to online.

You can review Wisconsin boating regulations, register your boat, or sign up for a safety class at the Wisconsin DNR website at <https://dnr.wisconsin.gov/topic/Boat>

BUOYS: The buoys are placed at approximately 100-150 feet from shore per DNR regulation. **It is illegal to move a buoy.**

LAUNCH FEES: There are fees required to launch your watercraft. Read the signs at the public launches and the state park launch for more details.

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Whitewater Lake Channel Buoys – NEW in 2022

There are 4 black and white channel buoys found at the tip of Ridge Road. Think of them as a center line on a road. When passing thru the channel, the buoys should be on your left side.

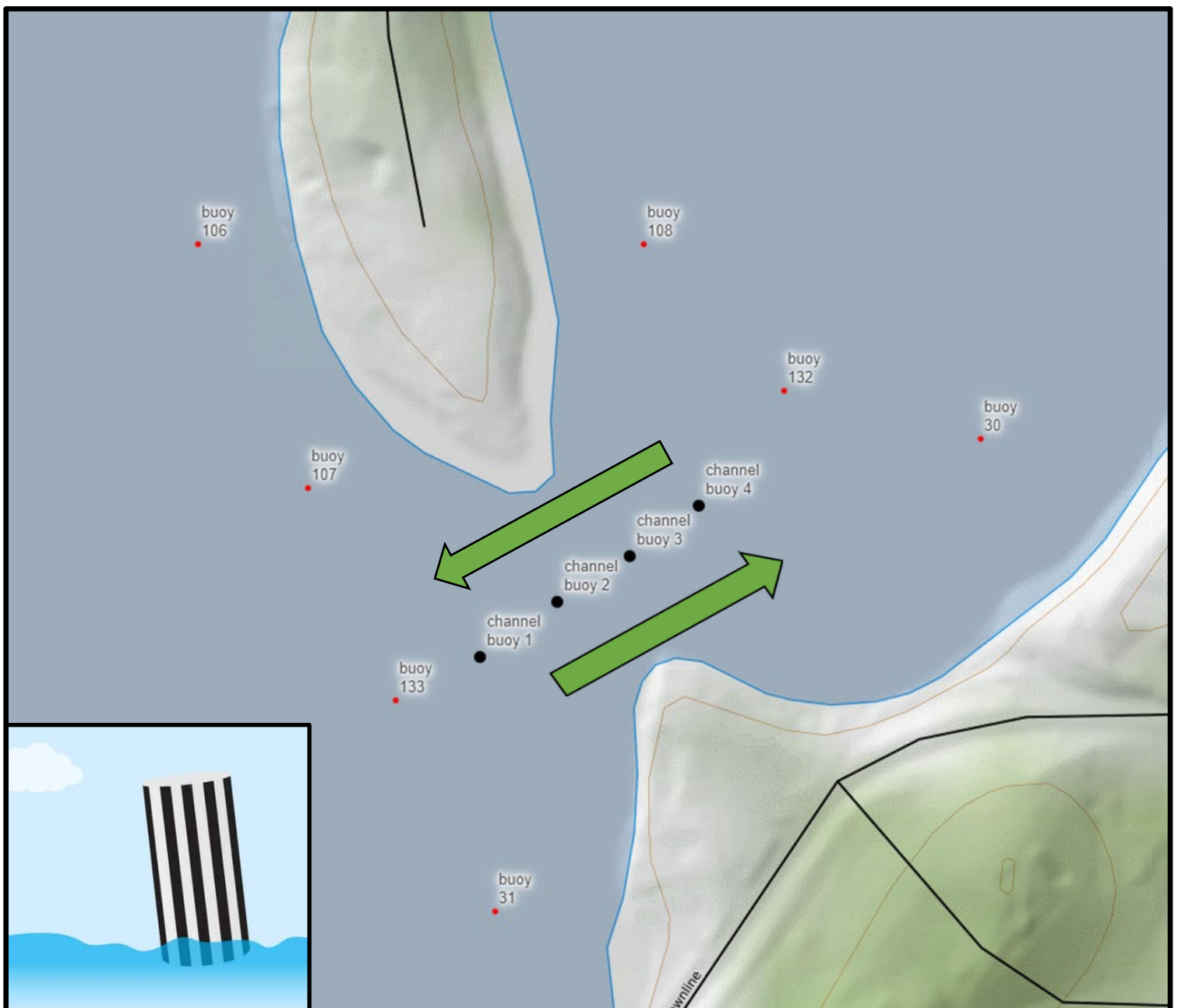


From the Wisconsin DNR

BLACK AND WHITE VERTICAL STRIPES

Marks the center of the channel.

Pass closely on either side.



OWN YOUR WAKE

The Whitewater-Rice Lakes Management District and the Greater Whitewater Lake Property Owners Association have begun a campaign to make boaters aware of the problems caused by large wakes and to urge boaters to take steps to reduce damaging wakes.

Your Rights

Wake surfing and other wake producing activities should be enjoyed without wakes impacting others' safety, creating damaging wakes, or interfering with others' enjoyment of the lake.



Your Responsibilities

- 1) Be responsible for your wake by observing and monitoring your boat wake
 - it travels farther and longer than you think
- 2) Stay in deep water in center of lake
- 3) Try to maintain a 300-foot operational distance from shore
- 4) Avoid making turns close to shore to reduce wake height
- 5) Trim and dump ballast when done surfing or wakeboarding
- 6) Avoid transition speeds - get boat on plane
- 7) Be considerate of boaters and property owners
 - Keep sessions to reasonable length
 - Switch parts of lake between riders
 - Avoid repetitive passes in the same area
 - Give wide berth to swimmers and small boats; consider stopping surf session to allow them to pass without interference from your wakes
 - Avoid surfing near sensitive shore areas that may be impacted by wakes
 - Use reasonable volume of music

WISCONSIN LAW STATES THAT YOU ARE RESPONSIBLE FOR YOUR SAFETY, THE SAFETY OF YOUR PASSENGERS AND CREW, AND ALL OTHER USERS ON THE LAKE THAT YOUR WAKES IMPACT