

LD 56 Testimony: Personal Watercraft (PWCs) on Wilson Ponds

Senator Dill, Representative Nadeau, Members of the IF&W Committee. My name is Laura Wood and I am here today in support of LD56. I reside in Arlington Massachusetts, but my heart, my happiness is Lower Wilson Pond in Greenville where I own lakeside property. My family has been finding peace at Wilson Pond since the 1920s when my maternal grandfather purchased our camp. And for over 90 years, we have been doing that. My mother started coming in the 1930s as a young child. I came up in 1972 when I was 4 months old. And in May 2010, my son visited camp for the first time. He was 5 months old.

My family's original camp was a way for my grandfather to escape the bustle of Boston and enjoy fly fishing. He came every summer to enjoy Wilson Pond as a place for wildlife to be wild and life to be simple. The camp remains primitive, no plumbing nor electricity. Two of my cousins have built camps next door along with their own traditions of seeking peace on Wilson Pond.

I remember swimming all the way across the lake when I was thirteen. I was so proud. I remember learning to sail a windsurfer – mostly pulling up the sail and then falling in the water – and trying a neighbor's stand-up paddleboard for the first time. Sightings of moose, loons, and bald eagles have peppered my summers as memorable thrills.

During my four decades of observation, I have been amazed that so few motorboats disturb the landscape. Excepting fourth of July weekend, people seem to understand that this is a small, quiet place. We delight in kayaking and canoeing, and we keep a 5HP motor for occasional use. And that is all we need. If someone wants a thrill ride, there are many better alternatives.

Wilson Pond is a quiet place. We need quiet places. I work with technology every day, but when I come to Wilson Pond, I am quick to drop my smart phone and unplug. Each year I call my longer August vacation my "technology detox" and I find my family, my inner thoughts, and my inner ear again. It is restorative.

The whining of a PWC, however, the pitch high like a massive mosquito, the rhythm irregular as it slaps the water, these characteristics make PWCs impossible to ignore. Wilson Pond, both Upper and Lower are not tiny. But in both cases, the geography of the lakes is deceptive. Both are narrow in the middle, making the presence of PWCs more noticeable and the safety issues more acute. They disrupt the peace, they diminish the safety of others, they potentially damage the habitat of our precious wildlife. Peer reviewed research indicates that PWCs drive faster and closer to nesting wildlife, causing more disruption than other motorboats. Loons and other wildlife depend on our defense of their habitat. We shouldn't call it simply another form of recreation when it can do so much harm.

My son is a fourth-generation flatlander and devotee of Wilson Pond, Greenville Maine, and the great North Woods. I urge you to preserve that quiet place for his future. I ask you to support LD56.