

Martina Witts
Maine Boating Impacts Coalition
LD 693

March 22, 2023

Dear Inland Fisheries and Wildlife Committee,

My name is Martina Witts, I live in Naples, ME on Trickey Pond. I volunteer as President of our lake association, Trickey Pond Environmental Protection Association. I also serve as a board member for the Lakes Environmental Association and for the past 18 months have chaired the collaborative meetings of the Maine Boating Impacts Coalition (MBIC). I'm here today to speak in support of LD 693 .

I'd like to express my thanks to the bill's sponsor Representative Riseman of Harrison and the nine co-sponsors. I am encouraged by the hardy support exemplified by 10 legislators from across our state that represent a diverse constituency and who share a common concern. Clearly the enhanced wakes generated by wake boats is an issue that has caught much attention, and it appears that many legislators understand that their potential for environmental damage requires a swift and appropriate solution. I believe that LD 693 is a step in that direction.

By their design, wake boats differ from other water craft in that they have the capability to produce wakes and waves far larger and more powerful than the typical ski boat or runabout that we have all become accustomed to. A recent article in The Robb Report reviewing the latest in wake boat technology promises a new design that will produce a "wave big enough to make Maui jealous". It is clear that these boats are unique and that they demand that special considerations be made for their use. For the past 18 months MBIC has collaborated with and gathered input from engineers, studied scientific peer reviewed studies, sought input from wake boat owners and property owners across Maine and invited stake holders, including Maine Audubon, IF&W and lake associations across the state and a local harbor master to join in our conversations to help develop a solution to the environmental and safety concerns presented by enhanced wakes, LD 693 is the result of those inclusive collaborative discussions.

Before I became involved with this topic through MBIC I witnessed first-hand what the scientific community has now proven – that the enhanced wakes caused by wake boats close to shore and in shallow water are incompatible with every ones' safe use of our lakes and ponds. I personally have experienced damage to my docked boats, to the docks themselves and to my shoreline all from the intense force of the enhanced wakes. Additionally, because my home lake is rather small, at only 311 acres, I've have had to adjust my use of the lake based on when the wake boats are on the water.

Scientific peer reviewed studies have demonstrated that the current 200 ft safety zone law which attempts to protect water quality, shorelines, wildlife, and public safety cannot offer protection against the new and enhanced technology of wake boats. Maine law, in the past, has recognized that as innovations bring us new and enhanced technologies new laws must be crafted to mitigate the potential harm they cause. Current Maine law offers us two good examples of this. The special restrictions placed on the operation of PWCs, regulating the time and manner of operation of the craft is one example. The "hands free" driving law placing regulations on the use of hand held devices on the road ways is another example. In both cases Maine legislators wisely recognized the potential for harm and injury presented by new technologies and responded with appropriate legislation.

LD 693 asks only that an enhanced safety zone be created to accommodate the enhanced wakes created by these specific water craft. By prohibiting the operation of Wake Boats in Wake Surfing mode within 500 feet of the shoreline or in waters less than 20 feet of depth Maine can continue to protect inland water quality, shorelines, wildlife and public safety. I respectfully ask that you vote "ought to pass".

Sincerely,
Martina Witts

Naples, ME