

LTE (As Published 5/12/22) to Lake Mills Leader on Rock Lake Slow-No Wake Proposal

I was disappointed to read the April 28th front page Leader article covering the Town of Lake Mills Board apparent rejection of proposed Slow No Wake improvements for Rock Lake. After months of suggestions, evidence and presentations from two lake stewardship organizations in our community (*Joint Rock Lake Committee* and *Rock Lake Improvement Association*) I had thought there would be an honest attempt to gauge public interest in the proposed changes before making a decision. Similar lakes in our region have already implemented the uniform 200 foot from shore slow no wake rule for boats in addition to personal watercraft (i.e., jet skis).

Any change to lake policy has to go through the Town of Lake Mills Board and the Department of Natural Resources. This is an important responsibility for what is arguably our community's most valuable asset. The uniform 200 foot boundary would eliminate overlapping and conflicting regulations, while improving safety and limiting the aquatic and shoreline damage from higher speed operation near shore.

A major concern is safety for the hundreds of visitors and area residents like myself, who want to enjoy paddling our kayaks or canoes -- or swimming in the lake. This is a real challenge as motorboats continue to get bigger and faster. The Town Chair was quoted as dismissing this concern because DNR data reported no accidents in the slow no wake zone statewide. Ironically that sounds more like a good argument *for* expanding the slow no wake area.

Most importantly, the town board's action seems to completely ignore the extensive 2017 public input used in developing the Rock Lake Management Plan. The top activities enjoyed by the hundreds of people who responded to this survey included (#3) swimming (#5) canoeing/kayaking, (#6) motorized boating, (#7) open water fishing. (Other top 7 activities included scenic enjoyment, peace/tranquility and observing wildlife.) This argues convincingly for expanding the 15% of the lake where motorboats must go slow to a mere 17% of the lake. Speeds would remain unrestricted on the other 83%.

The town board was reminded of this public preference data very recently. However they seem to have ignored it and killed the chance for further public input on a sensible, well-supported proposal. Certainly there are motorized users who would prefer to go fast everywhere, but this decision showed a callous disregard for the greater community that uses Rock Lake.

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