

Charles County - Potomac River – Westmoreland (VA) State Park

What was proposed?

The Department proposed establishing a minimum wake speed zone on the Potomac River at Westmoreland State Park. Westmoreland State Park is located on the Virginia side of the river and is a popular area for water activities. The proposed action creates a minimum wake speed zone that is approximately 800 yards in length, extends 100 yards from shore, and is effective at all times during the boating season (April 15 through October 15). The zone begins at the park's boat ramp and encompasses the day use beach area.

Map of proposed minimum wake zone area



Why is this change necessary?

The proposed action addresses safety concerns at a heavily used state park during the summer months. The minimum wake zone will reduce speeds of personal watercraft and boats, and reduce the risk of accidents and physical harm from vessel traffic interacting with individuals on the beach and in the swimming area.

Who will this affect?

All boaters and personal watercraft operating in the vicinity of Westmoreland State Park.

What is the specific regulatory action?

Amend Regulation .05 under COMAR 08.18.21 Potomac River.

Have these changes been discussed with advisory bodies or other interested individuals?

- The idea was scoped with the Boat Act Advisory Committee at their meeting in September 2025.
- The idea was scoped with the general public from June 23, 2025, through August 3, 2025.

Regulatory Process

Boating rules in Maryland may be created by either the General Assembly or the Department. When the Department creates a boating rule, it is called a regulation. When the General Assembly creates a rule, it is called a statute. The Department often has to create a regulation to implement a statute. The regulatory process begins with scoping and the Department follows normal [procedures](#) as concepts move forward.

During the scoping process, the Department gathers suggestions and ideas from stakeholders and others about how to solve a boating problem or address a need. The goal of scoping is to identify issues, potential impacts, and reasonable alternatives associated with the issues so that management actions can be developed. After the public has had an opportunity to comment on possible management actions during the scoping process, the Department considers these comments and develops an appropriate management strategy.

At the conclusion of the scoping process, the Department determined that the action was necessary and appropriate. The rules were promulgated following the Administrative Procedures Act described in Title 10, Subtitle 1 of the State Government Article Annotated Code of Maryland.

- The General Assembly's Administrative, Executive, and Legislative Review Committee reviews the regulatory proposal for fiscal and legal analysis.
- The proposal was printed by the Division of State Documents in the Maryland Register on December 12, 2025.
- A 30 day public comment period began on the day of publication. The comment period ended January 12, 2026.
- After reviewing the comments, the Department adopted the changes.
- The final action was published in the Maryland Register on February 6, 2026.

Effective Date of Change

February 16, 2026