

Deep Creek Lake Policy and Review Board Regulatory Committee Meeting Minutes

Meeting Date: February 26, 2026

Time: 2:00PM

Location: Deep Creek State Park Discovery Center

Board Members in Attendance:

- Chairman Bob Browning (Virtual)
- Bob Sutton, Property Owners Association representative
- Steve Green, Alternate for the Delegate
- Barry Weinberg
- Parker Jacobs
- Karen Meyers

Other Attendees:

- Department of Natural Resources (DNR): Assistant Secretary Paul Peditto, Western Regional Manager Sarah Milbourne, Deep Creek Lake Manager Cristina Sanders, Deep Creek Lake Park Manager Roy Musselwhite, Grace Armendariz
- Sergeant Ethan Leonard, Natural Resource Police
- Lauren McCann, Boat Act Advisory Committee (BAAC)

Meeting Summary

The Policy and Review Board (PRB) Regulation Committee met to discuss updates from the Boat Act Advisory Committee (BAAC) Subcommittee regarding potential regulatory changes affecting wake boats, wakesurfing, and general boating activity on Deep Creek Lake. Discussion focused on definitional gaps within COMAR, enforcement concerns, shoreline impacts, whether additional regulations specific to Deep Creek Lake should be recommended, and other environmental concerns. After discussion, the Board voted to maintain current regulations (status quo) regarding the distance a wakeboat must operate from a structure. All other recommendations from the BAAC were accepted. Cristina Sanders and Sarah Milbourne emphasized the need for enhanced education and outreach efforts. The meeting adjourned at 3:35 PM.

Detailed Minutes

BAAC Subcommittee Update

Lauren McCann provided an update as the BAAC Subcommittee representative.

Key points discussed:

- COMAR does not currently define what constitutes a “wake boat.”

- The BAAC has considered potentially requiring a safety lanyard on wake boats, similar to personal watercraft (PWC).
- Sound monitoring was discussed, particularly concerning amplified music played from boats.
- The BAAC Subcommittee plans to meet again, though a date has not yet been determined.
- The current BAAC definition of wakeboarding does not include wakesurfing, creating a regulatory gray area.

Cristina Sanders reminded the PRB that it must provide recommendations to the BAAC by April 15, 2026. The Board may either recommend that Deep Creek Lake be included in any proposed regulatory changes or recommend exclusion.

Regulatory Process Overview

Assistant Secretary Paul Peditto explained that the Maryland Department of Natural Resources (DNR) will begin regulatory scoping in April. The scoping phase marks the formal consideration of regulatory changes and includes an opportunity for public comment. Following public input, DNR would revise proposed regulations before submission to the Maryland Register for final review.

Chairman Bob Browning stated that the Policy and Review Board retains authority over regulations specific to Deep Creek Lake; regulations cannot be applied to the lake without their input.

Enforcement and Operational Concerns

Sergeant Ethan Leonard of the Natural Resources Police (NRP) reported receiving calls related to shoreline erosion and dock movement attributed to boat wakes.

Discussion included:

- The transition from wakeboarding to wakesurfing presents enforcement challenges due to definitional gaps.
- There is currently no explicit regulatory language addressing wakesurfing.
- NRP suggested wakeboarding and wakesurfing be grouped together, as they are operationally similar.
- BAAC discussed allowing wake boats to operate within 100 feet of a dock if they are not actively towing a rider.
- Questions were raised about how vessels retrieving a wakesurfer would be categorized under potential regulations.

Additional considerations included:

- Whether designated time periods for wakeboarding (similar to PWC time restrictions) should be explored.
- Whether expanding no-wake zones could address shoreline impacts without changing broader regulations.
- Whether boating congestion overall, rather than wake boats specifically, is the larger issue.
- Whether towing water sports in general should require greater distance (e.g., 200 feet) from docks and structures.

Board Determination

After discussion, the members concluded that the existing regulations regarding the distance a wakeboat must operate from a structure should remain unchanged at this time. All other recommendations from the BAAC were accepted.

Steve Green made a motion to maintain the status quo, which was seconded by Karen Meyers. Bob Sutton and Chairman Bob Browning agreed.
The motion carried.

Outreach and Education

Cristina Sanders and Sarah Milbourne emphasized the need to focus on public education and outreach rather than regulatory changes. Suggested efforts include:

- Educational videos on official websites
- Increased presence of launch stewards
- Informational magnets and brochures
- Additional signage near boat ramps

The Board agreed that improved awareness and compliance could help address concerns without altering current regulations.

Adjournment

Steve Green motioned to adjourn at 3:35 PM.
The meeting was adjourned at 3:35 PM.