

New Law Impacting Wakeboarding and Wakesurfing Effective on July 1, 2023

Who is affected?

Wakeboarders, wakesurfers, and boat operators participating in both sports.

In 2023, the Georgia General Assembly passed House Bill 121, bringing about changes in the regulations governing wakeboarding and wakesurfing activities on state waters. The new legislation aims to enhance safety measures, promote responsible water sports, and ensure a balance between recreation and public and private property preservation.

What does the new law regulate?

- **Distance Restrictions:** The bill includes distance restrictions for wakeboarding and wakesurfing. The legislation states that “no person shall engage in wakesurfing or wakeboarding upon waters of this state within 200 feet of any moored vessel; any wharf, dock, pier, piling, or bridge structure or abutment; or any shoreline adjacent to a full-time or part-time residence, public park, public beach, public swimming area, marina, restaurant, or other public use area.”
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- **Mandatory Personal Flotation Devices (PFDs):** The bill mandates that all wakeboarders and wakesurfers must wear a U.S. Coast Guard-approved life jacket at all times while participating in these activities.
 - **No wakeboarding or wakesurfing between sunset and sunrise.**

Are there any exceptions in HB 121?

- The bill does not apply to a regatta, boat race, marine parade, tournament, or exhibition for which the Georgia DNR Commissioner has granted a marine event permit. It also does not apply on Intracoastal waterways, rivers, or private lakes.

Does the new law affect the current 100-foot law?

- HB 121 does not change the 100-foot law, which applies to all vessels.

Does the new law change any laws or regulations related to No Wake Zones?

- The new law has no effect on No Wake Zones, which require all vessels to slow to idle speed while traversing them.

In 2023, Game Wardens will begin enforcement of the law, with an emphasis on educating boaters, however, repeat offenders or those engaging in blatant and reckless disregard for the law, will be dealt with accordingly.