

TOWN OF RHINE MUNICIPAL CODE

**CHAPTER 5: BOAT CODE (05/12/2026)**

<u>Section</u>	<u>Title</u>	<u>Page</u>
	Table of Contents	1
5.01	Boat Code – Intent	2
5.02	State Statutes Adopted	2
5.03	Local Regulations of Prohibited Operation	3
5.04	Sunday Operation Prohibited	4
5.05	Enforcement	4
5.06	Penalty	4
5.07	Jurisdiction	5
5.08	Markers and Navigation Aids	5
5.09	State Statute Adopted – Intoxicated Boating	5
5.10	Speed Limit	5
5.11	Regulation of Mooring Buoys	5
5.12	Artificial Wake Enhancement Prohibited on Crystal Lake	7
5.13	Artificial Wake Enhancement Prohibited on Little Elkhart Lake	7
5.14	Artificial Wake Enhancement Prohibited on Elkhart Lake	7

**5.01 BOAT CODE – INTENT.** The intent of this Ordinance is to provide safe and healthful conditions for the enjoyment of aquatic recreation consistent with public rights and interest and the capability of the water resource, and all regulations herein apply to the use of waters under the jurisdiction of the Town of Rhine.

**5.02 STATE STATUTES ADOPTED.** The following statutory provisions describing and defining regulations with respect to water traffic, boats, boating, and related water activities and safety in the following enumerated Sections of the Wisconsin Statutes are hereby adopted and by reference made a part of this Ordinance to be enforced upon all waters of the Town of Rhine, Sheboygan County, Wisconsin.

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| (1)  | 30.07        | Transportation of Aquatic Plants and Placement of Objects in Navigable Waters [ <i>Created 8/5/14, Ord 2014-4 (Renum (1)-(16))</i> ] |
| (2)  | 30.50        | Definitions  |
| (3)  | 30.51        | Operation of Unnumbered Motor Boats Prohibited; Exemptions   |
| (4)  | 30.52        | Certificates of Number; Applications, Issuance, Renewals, Fees   |
| (5)  | 30.53        | Identification Number to be Displayed on Boats; Certificates to be Carried   |
| (6)  | 30.54        | Transfer of Ownership of Numbered Boat   |
| (7)  | 30.55        | Notice of Abandonment or Destruction of Boat or Change of Address  |
| (8)  | 30.60        | Classification of Motor Boat   |
| (9)  | 30.61        | Lighting Equipment   |
| (10) | 30.62        | Other Equipment  |
| (11) | 30.64        | Patrol Boats Exempt from Certain Regulations   |
| (12) | 30.65        | Traffic Rules  |
| (13) | 30.66        | Speed Restrictions (Reasonable & Prudent)  |
| (14) | 30.67        | Accidents and Accident Reports   |
| (15) | 30.68        | Prohibited Operation   |
| (16) | 30.69 (1b-2) | Water Skiing Town of Rhine   |
| (17) | 30.70        | Skin Diving  |

**5.03 LOCAL REGULATIONS OF PROHIBITED OPERATION.**

- (1) That no person may operate a motor boat towing a person on water skis, aquaplane, or similar device and that no person may engage in water skiing, aquaplaning, or similar activity at any time from 7:30 p.m. to 10:00 a.m. except to the extent that such activities are prohibited by Wis. Stat. § 30.69(1)(a).
- (2) A speed of “slow-no wake” speed is established at all hours for all boats operating on Big Elkhart Lake to the shore side of no-wake buoys designated as follows:

1.	N43	49.801	W088	01.972
2.	N43	49.730	W088	01.949
3.	N43	49.636	W088	01.886
4.	N43	49.604	W088	01.777
5.	N43	49.583	W088	01.779
6.	N43	49.508	W088	01.691
7.	N43	49.393	W088	01.740
8.	N43	49.356	W088	01.691
9.	N43	49.355	W088	01.611
10.	N43	49.270	W088	01.530
11.	N43	49.239	W088	01.387
12.	N43	49.192	W088	01.294
13.	N43	49.205	W088	01.228
14.	N43	49.239	W088	01.222
15.	N43	49.322	W088	01.263
16.	N43	49.403	W088	01.268
17.	N43	49.481	W088	01.222
18.	N43	49.514	W088	01.107
19.	N43	49.557	W088	01.101
20.	N43	49.596	W088	01.098
21.	N43	49.641	W088	01.095
22.	N43	49.695	W088	01.088
23.	N43	49.723	W088	01.196
24.	N43	49.721	W088	01.290
25.	N43	49.719	W088	01.404
26.	N43	49.721	W088	01.547
27.	N43	49.753	W088	01.673
28.	N43	49.846	W088	01.734
29.	N43	49.866	W088	01.811
30.	N43	49.879	W088	01.894
31.	N43	49.871	W088	01.985
32.	N43	49.853	W088	02.061
33.	N43	49.826	W088	02.141

Buoys are numbered in conjunction with their location beginning at the outlet in a counterclockwise direction. Buoy locations revised with Ordinance 2026-8 adopted May 12, 2026.

- (3) A speed limit of “slow-no wake” speed is established on all Town of Rhine waters between the hours of 7:30 p.m. and 10:00 a.m. except as prohibited by Wis. Stat. § 30.68.
- (4) No person may operate a motorboat towing a person on water skis, aquaplane, or similar device unless there is in the boat a competent person as required by Wis. Stat. § 30.69(1). The operator of such motorboat shall meet all of the requirements of Wis. Stat. Ch. 30.

#### **5.04 SUNDAY OPERATION PROHIBITED.**

- (1) There shall be no power boating on Elkhart Lake, Little Elkhart Lake, or Crystal Lake during the hours of 12:01 a.m. to midnight on Sundays beginning the second Sunday in June through and including the second Sunday in September of any year except as is provided in Subsection (2). Power boating is defined as any craft propelled by an electrical, gasoline, diesel, or other type of motor.
- (2) Commencing the second Sunday in June and ending the third Sunday in September, craft propelled by electric motors and operated at “slow-no wake” speeds shall be allowed on Elkhart Lake, Little Elkhart Lake, and Crystal Lake at all times.

**5.05 ENFORCEMENT.** The Village of Elkhart Lake Police Department, pursuant to contract with the Town of Rhine, will provide law enforcement services and will patrol Elkhart Lake and Little Elkhart Lake and enforce all Sections relating to boating and boating activities. Enforcement of this Ordinance on Crystal Lake will also be provided by the Village of Elkhart Lake Police Department pursuant to said contract with the Town of Rhine. Said contract provides for an annual sum to be paid by the Town of Rhine to the Village of Elkhart Lake for said services. The officers patrolling and enforcing these Sections shall be hired and under the control of the Elkhart Lake Chief of Police and Village Board of Elkhart Lake

#### **5.06 PENALTY<sup>1</sup>.**

- (1) Wisconsin state boating penalties as found in s. 30.80, Wis Stats., and deposits established in the Uniform Deposit and Bail Schedule established by the Wisconsin Judicial Conferences, are hereby adopted by reference, except all references to fines are amended to forfeitures and all references to imprisonment are deleted.
- (2) To the extent that the penalty for any violation of this Ordinance is not provided under Wisconsin state boating penalties as found in s. 30.80, Wis. Stats., any person violating this Ordinance shall forfeit \$500 for the first offense and shall forfeit \$1000 for the second and subsequent offenses within one year. Deposits established in the WISCONSIN CIRCUIT COURT FEE, FORFEITURE, FIN AND SURCHARGE TABLES shall also apply to any violation.

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<sup>1</sup> Revised with Ordinance 2025-5 adopted November 11, 2025.

**5.07 JURISDICTION.** It is expressly understood that the jurisdiction over the waters of Big Elkhart Lake is jointly held by the Town of Rhine and the Village of Elkhart Lake. It is also expressly understood that jurisdiction over the waters of Little Elkhart Lake is also held by the Town of Rhine. It is further understood that jurisdiction over the waters of Crystal Lake is jointly held by the Town of Rhine and Town of Plymouth.

**5.08 MARKERS AND NAVIGATION AIDS.** The police officer employed pursuant to Section 5.05 or anyone he directs shall have authority to place and remove markers and navigation aids as shall best carry out the intent of Chapter 5 of this Code and the public interest as authorized and in compliance with the regulations of the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources. No other person shall place, remove, damage, destroy, moor or attach any watercraft to the same.

**5.09 STATE STATUTE ADOPTED—INTOXICATED BOATING.** Wis. Stat. § 30.681 relating to intoxicated boating is hereby adopted by reference thereto and made a part of this Ordinance to be enforced upon the waters of Elkhart Lake, Little Elkhart Lake, and Crystal Lake, all in the County of Sheboygan, State of Wisconsin.

**5.10 SPEED LIMIT.** In addition to complying with the speed restrictions imposed by Section 5.03(2), no person shall operate a boat or vessel at a speed in excess of thirty-five (35) miles per hour on Elkhart Lake, Crystal Lake, or Little Elkhart Lake, (*Rev. 08/99*)

**5.11 REGULATION OF MOORING BUOYS.**

- (1) No person shall place or use a mooring buoy within two hundred feet (200') from shore in the waters of Elkhart Lake without first obtaining a permit. Permits to place mooring buoys shall be issued by the Chief of Police for the Village of Elkhart Lake. Applicants for the placement of mooring buoys shall demonstrate compliance with the provisions of this Ordinance and the requirements of Wis. Stat. § 30.772 and Wis. Admin. Code Ch. NR 5.09. No person shall place a mooring buoy in the waters of Elkhart Lake beyond two hundred feet (200') from shore without first obtaining a permit from the Town Board for the Town of Rhine and the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources.
- (2) The application for any such permit issued by the Town Board or the Chief of Police shall describe the real estate and approximate location of the mooring buoy, setting forth the distancing of the mooring buoy to the property lines of abutting neighboring riparian lands together with any additional details and specifications which the Town Board or Chief of Police may require. Said application shall also state the name and permanent address of the applicant.
- (3) Upon the filing of such application, the issuing authority shall make proper investigation and determine that the applicant is in compliance with all of the requirements of this Section and applicable laws of the State of Wisconsin and rules and orders of the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources.
- (4) In determining whether or not to recommend a mooring buoy permit, the issuing authority shall take into consideration the following:
  - (a) The number of moorings for a specific distance of frontage or within a specified area.

- (b) The number of boats to be attached to any mooring buoy.
  - (c) The distance between mooring buoys.
  - (d) The safe distance of moored boats from any other moored boats, properly marked and established traffic lanes, properly marked swimming or bathing areas, or structures, including piers, rafts, docks, and wharves.
  - (e) Whether or not the applicant is a riparian owner.
- (5)** Under no circumstances may a mooring buoy be placed or used on Elkhart Lake if any of the following conditions exist:
- (a) The mooring buoy obstructs or interferes with public rights or interest in the navigable waters of Elkhart Lake. The riparian owner does not give written permission to a non-riparian owner for the placement and use of the mooring buoy.
  - (b) The mooring buoy or use of the mooring buoy interferes with the rights of other riparian owners.
  - (c) The mooring buoy or use of the mooring buoy adversely affects critical or significant fish or wildlife habitat.
  - (d) The mooring anchor is placed more than two hundred feet (200') from the ordinary high water mark of Elkhart Lake.
- (6)** In the event that the mooring buoy for which a permit has been granted is not erected, constructed, placed or maintained in accordance with the application, plans specification, details, and drawings submitted by the applicant thereof or in the event such mooring is erected, constructed, or maintained in violation of any of the provisions of this Ordinance or any of the applicable laws of the State of Wisconsin, the Town Board for the Town of Rhine may revoke said permit after holding an evidentiary hearing, together with a summary of the alleged violation shall be mailed by certified mail to the holder of said permit at least ten (10) days prior to the date of the hearing thereon. If the permit is revoked, the reasons therefor shall be stated in the minutes of the meeting of the governing body.
- (7)** A mooring buoy which is placed or used in violation of this Section constitutes a public nuisance and any person who violates this Ordinance shall be subject to a forfeiture not to exceed fifty dollars (\$50.00) for each such violation. Each day during which a violation exists is a separate offense. Any mooring buoys placed without a permit or otherwise illegally placed may be removed by the Town Board at the expense of the owner of the mooring buoy

**5.12 ARTIFICIAL WAKE ENHANCEMENT PROHIBITED ON CRYSTAL LAKE<sup>2</sup>**

- (1) **Prohibited Equipment.** No person may use or employ on Crystal Lake water sacks, ballast tanks, submersible wings or any other device which causes a boat to operate in a bow-high manner, or which increases or enhances a boat's wake
- (2) **Prohibited operation.** No person may operate a boat on Crystal Lake in an artificially bow-high manner in order to increase or enhance the boat's wake. Such prohibited operation shall include wake enhancement by use of ballast, mechanical hydrofoils, uneven loading or operation at transition speed (the speed at which the boat is operating at greater than slow-no-wake speed, but not fast enough so that the boat is planing).

**5.13 ARTIFICIAL WAKE ENHANCEMENT PROHIBITED ON LITTLE ELKHART LAKE<sup>3</sup>**

- (1) **Prohibited Equipment.** No person may use or employ on Little Elkhart Lake water sacks, ballast tanks, submersible wings or any other device which causes a boat to operate in a bow-high manner, or which increases or enhances a boat's wake.
- (2) **Prohibited Operation.** No person may operate a boat on Little Elkhart Lake in an artificially bow-high manner in order to increase or enhance the boat's wake. Such prohibited operation shall include wake enhancement by use of ballast, mechanical hydrofoils, uneven loading or operation at transition speed (the speed at which the boat is operating at greater than slow-no-wake speed, but not fast enough so that the boat is planing).

**5.14 ARTIFICIAL WAKE ENHANCEMENT PROHIBITED ON ELKHART LAKE<sup>4</sup>**

- (1) **Prohibited Equipment.** No person may use or employ on Elkhart Lake ballast tanks, ballast bags or fins to cause a boat to operate in a bow-high manner, or which increases or enhances a boat's wake.
- (2) **Prohibited Operation.** No person may operate a boat on Elkhart Lake in an artificially bow-high manner having the effect of increasing the boat's wake. Such prohibited operation shall include wake enhancement by use of ballast tanks, or ballast bags or fins, or continuous operation at transition speed (the speed below planing speed in which a boat is operating in plowing mode). For the purpose of this provision, "continuous operation" shall mean "operation that is not acceleration for the purpose of achieving a state of planing".
- (3) **Certain Operations Excluded.** In no event shall any of the following operations be deemed a violation of this Ordinance, provided such operations do not use of employ ballast tanks, ballast bags or wake enhancing fins: i) water skiing, ii) tubing, iii) wake boarding employing a tow rope, iv) brief transition operation to empty a boat of bilge water, or v) brief transition operation of a boat accelerating into a planing condition.

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<sup>2</sup> 5.12 was created by Ord. 2021-01 adopted April 13, 2021.

<sup>3</sup> 5.13 was created by Ord. 2021-02 adopted July 6, 2021.

<sup>4</sup> 5.14 was created by Ord. 2025-05 adopted November 11, 2025.