

# County board OKs changes to slow/no wake

River split into three sections

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JANESVILLE

Rock County boaters and businesses near Newville will get an extra 6 inches of water to play with on the Rock River due to changes the county board approved Thursday to the countywide slow/no-wake ordinance.

The new ordinance puts the slow/no-wake levels along the river at:

8.5 feet from the Beloit-Rock Townline Road bridge south to the state line.

6.5 feet from the Beloit-Rock Townline Road bridge north to Indianford Dam.

8 feet from the Indianford Dam to Lake Koshkonong near Newville.

Before 2012, towns were responsible for slow/no wake rules, leading to a confusing patchwork of regulations for boaters.

Then last year, the county board enacted a countywide ordinance that split the county's portion of the river in two. The trigger point north of the Indianford Dam to Newville and Lake Koshkonong was set at 7.5 feet. The much longer stretch south, through Janesville and Beloit to the Illinois line, was set at 6.5 feet. On Monday—partly in response to complaints about slow/no wake from boaters—the board's public safety and justice committee agreed to recommend dividing the river into three parts and raising the section from the Beloit-Rock Townline Road bridge south to the stateline to 8.5 feet, based on the gauge in Afton. The committee recommended that the midsection north of that bridge to the Indianford Dam remain at 6.5 feet, based on the Afton gauge, and the run above Indianford remain at 7.5 feet, based on the gauge at Lake Koshkonong.

At Thursday's meeting, the depth in the ordinance for the third stretch of the river north of the dam to the lake was amended twice: from 8 feet, to 7.5 feet and back to 8 feet.

The county board passed the proposed changes with a 22-2 vote.

Many supervisors who originally supported amending the level to 7.5 feet said they changed their minds after touring the river and realizing 8 feet was an acceptable level that did not cause much damage to property and was a good compromise for boaters.

"I just feel that 8 feet is feasible. It's a little bit to help the businesses. It's a little bit to help the landowners," Supervisor Ivan Collins said.

Many residents who attended the meeting opposed the change to 8 feet.

Evan Sayre, chairman of the town of Fulton, said he thinks the level should be even lower than 7.5 feet for the upper section because of the damage the waves cause to property along the river, although at that level, the land along the river at least had a chance to dry out before people were speeding along the river again.

“If they’re going to do 8 feet, they need to wait a week,” Sayre said. “That would give it a chance to get the water out from behind the sea walls and give the water a chance to get out of the bank.”

Hank Stockwell lives along the river in the Indianford-to-Koshkonong section and said the supervisors did not spend enough time on the river to see the damage the high water can do.

“There’s dead trees, acres of land, and when there’s high water, all of it is going to disappear,” Stockwell said. “Both of my neighbor’s piers are underwater right now. It’s just a no-win situation for anyone who lives on the river.”

The changes in the ordinance may be put in effect as early as July 4, but slow/no wake orders are likely to remain on all stretches of the river through the holiday and beyond because of water approaching or exceeding flood levels.

## ROCK COUNTY

**Slow/no wake**

**1** A gauge height of 8 feet would stretch from the Dane/Rock County line at Newville to the Indianford Dam.

**2** A gauge height of 6.5 feet would stretch from the Indianford Dam south to the Beloit Rock Townline Road bridge.

**3** A gauge height of 8.5 feet would stretch from Beloit Rock Townline Road bridge to the state line.

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