

# Safety patrol left off slow/no-wake ordinance on purpose

By Jeff Brown  
Reporter staff

Contrary to an article in last week's Reporter, the Rock County board of supervisors did not forget to authorize the Rock River Safety Patrol to enforce the slow/no-wake order on the Rock River when it enacted an ordinance on June 27 setting the water level at which the order goes into effect on various sections of the river.

The board's vice-chair, Sandy Kraft, said the ordinance authorized only the Rock County Sheriff's office and the state Department of Natural Resources to enforce the slow/no-wake order because the safety patrol lacks the authority to enforce county ordinances.

Kraft said the terms of the agree-

ment between the towns of Albion, Fulton, Koshkonong, Milton, and Sumner that created the safety patrol limit its power to enforcing violations of town of Fulton and town of Milton ordinances and violations of the state criminal code.

The county's lawyer concurs. Jeffrey Kuglitsch, Rock County corporation counsel, said the county has enacted multiple ordinances to impose slow/no-wake orders on the Rock River since 1999, when the safety patrol was created, and none of them has included the safety patrol.

In order for the safety patrol to enforce the slow/no-wake order said Kuglitsch, "we'd have to have an agreement with them." Kuglitsch said the safety patrol can enforce the

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slow/no-wake order when called upon to do so by the sheriff under the terms of a mutual aid agreement between the two agencies.

Last week's article reported that the county left the safety patrol off the ordinance in "[a]n apparent oversight." The article's basis for that erroneous contention was a statement to that effect made by the safety patrol's captain, Henry Sautin, at the safety patrol's monthly board meeting on July 3.

The article did not state, but should have, that two messages left with Mr. Kuglitsch seeking clarification on whether the board intentionally left the safety patrol off the ordinance—one on Monday, one on Tuesday, the day the paper went to press—went unreturned.

Some people who live along the river attended the July 3 meeting and said they were upset at what they perceive as lax enforcement of the slow/no-wake order. They said boats violating the order cause waves that

damage their piers and erode the shoreline.

Several members of the safety patrol's board and one of the safety patrol's officers responded by saying that overly aggressive enforcement of the slow/no-wake order would keep boaters away and hurt businesses along the river and Lake Koshkonong that depend on summer boat traffic for revenue.

The towns of Albion, Fulton, Koshkonong, Milton, and Sumner each pay \$3,000 per year to fund the patrol, which employs eight part-time officers and operates one motorboat and one jet-ski. If the safety patrol can't directly enforce the slow/no-wake order, said Fulton town chairman Evan Sayre, perhaps it's outlived its usefulness. "Maybe we need to turn our buoys over to the county and get out of the river business. All things come and go, and I think the time for the boat patrol is over. That's being realistic."

Safety patrol board chairman

Frank Micale, a member of the Sumner town board, disagrees. "That's not fair," said Micale, referring to Sayre's comment. "They're worth more than they cost in terms of keeping people safe out there on the lake."

Micale shares Sayre's distress, however, at the county's decision to leave the safety patrol off the slow/no-wake ordinance. "If they don't want the safety patrol to do that, that's their choice. It's unfair that people will make the mistake of seeing the patrol boat on the river, and it looks to the public like they're not doing their job. It puts the safety patrol in an awkward position."

Micale said he'll instruct safety patrol officers to direct members of the public upset with the slow/no-wake order not being enforced to contact the county. "If people say something to us, we're going to have to say 'If the county doesn't want our help, maybe you need to relay that to the county and see what they think.'"

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