

ARTICLE II VESSELS ON COLUMBIA LAKE TOWN ORDINANCE

Town of Columbia, CT / Part II: General Legislation / Lake and Beach Use

Article II Vessels on Columbia Lake

[Adopted 3-7-1964 TM; amended 11-16-1987 TM; 11-15-1988 TM; 4-8-1991 TM]

§ 190-3 Purpose.

The purpose of this article is to limit vessels operated on the waters of Columbia Lake to those owned by residents, qualified nonresidents, and qualified temporary residents. All approved vessel owners and operators shall comply with Connecticut State Boating Regulations as well as applicable Town Ordinances and will use only approved vessels deemed environmentally safe and appropriate for recreational use on Columbia Lake, CT, a 281-acre waterbody with an average water depth of 14'.

§ 190-4 Definitions.

As used in this Article II, the following terms shall have the meanings indicated. Note, the starred definitions are taken from the 2024 State of Connecticut Boating Safety Enforcement Manual to be consistent with the state definitions as taught in State Boat Certification (SBC) and Certificate of Personal Watercraft (CPWO) courses.

LAKE

Columbia Lake is the 281-acre lake located within the Town.

QUALIFIED NONRESIDENT

A Qualified Nonresident is a person not domiciled in the Town, but who is qualified to vote at Town Meetings.

QUALIFIED TEMPORARY RESIDENT

A Qualified Temporary Resident is a person not domiciled in Town, but who resides in the Town for four consecutive weeks or more during a calendar year as a bona fide lessee of premises owned by a resident or qualified nonresident.

RESIDENT

A Resident is a person with a bona fide permanent domicile in the Town.

VESSEL*

Every description of watercraft, other than a seaplane on water, used or capable of being used as a means of transportation on water.

MOTORBOAT*

Any vessel, not more than sixty-five feet in length and propelled by machinery, whether or not such machinery is the principal source of propulsion.

PERSONAL WATERCRAFT (PWC)*

Any inboard powered vessel less than sixteen feet in length that has an internal combustion engine or an electric system powering a water-jet pump as its primary source of motor propulsion and that is designed to be operated by a person sitting, standing, or kneeling on the vessel, rather than the conventional manner of sitting or standing inside the vessel.

JETTED ARTICULATED VESSEL (JAV)*

Any vessel that consists of a base pumping unit used to generate water or other media under pressure, an articulated hose used to convey media under pressure, or a jointed or flexible conduit used to convey such media and a device through which high-pressure media is ejected for the purpose of propelling, elevating, or submerging an operator or passenger.

SAILBOAT*

Any vessel propelled by sail alone.

SAILBOARD*

Any sailboat whose unsupported mast is connected by a swivel or a flexible universal joint to a hull similar to the hull of a surfboard.

MOTORBOATS FOR COMMERCIAL USE

Any motorboat launched in conjunction with any form of business enterprise where money or other compensation is received, whether actual or implied, for employment of the vessel. The only exception is the launch of commercial motorboat(s) specifically approved by the Town of Columbia Board of Selectmen and any and all other applicable government authorities for purposes of the management of the lake's ecosystem, permitted structures on the lake, public safety, and other appropriate governmental needs.

RECREATIONAL VESSELS

Any vessel used for approved recreational purposes.

OPERATE*

Means to navigate or otherwise use a vessel. A vessel is "under way" when it is not moored, anchored, made fast to the shore or aground.

MARINE PATROL OFFICER:

A Marine Patrol Officer is a person appointed pursuant to Columbia Town Ordinances, Section 190-15.

SAFE BOATING CERTIFICATE (SBC) and CERTIFICATE OF PERSONAL WATERCRAFT OPERATION (CPWO):

To legally operate any boat with a motor or a sailboat 19½ feet in length or longer, a Connecticut resident must possess a Safe Boating Certificate (SBC) by taking a DEEP approved boating safety course, per the CT General Statutes, Section 15 – 140 e. All persons must possess a Certificate of Personal Watercraft Operation (CPWO) to legally operate a personal watercraft (PWC) on Connecticut waters, regardless of state residency as required by subsection (b) of Section 15-140j of the CT General Statutes. These should be carried on board at all times while operating the vessel.

WATER SKIING*

Includes towing of any person behind a vessel under power, whether such person is connected by a towing line to such vessel or not, and similar forms of activity in which a passenger exits a vessel and uses the suction or wake of the underway vessel to engage in the activity.

§ 190-5 Limitation of Use of Columbia Lake.

A.

No person shall launch or operate or permit the operation of any motorboat on the waters of Columbia Lake unless such vessel is owned by a resident, qualified nonresident qualified temporary resident of the Town, owned by the Town or the vessel is approved for use on the Lake by the Board of Selectmen.

B.

The provisions of this section shall not apply to any vessel owned by the United States or the State of Connecticut and operated by an officer, employee, contractor, or other permittee thereof in the performance of his duties.

§ 190-6 Prohibiting Certain Use of Columbia Lake.

A.

No person shall launch or operate any motorized vessel or motor vehicle or construction equipment on the lake bottom below the high-water mark except by special permit from the Board of Selectmen. The "high-water mark" is defined as the point at which the water of Columbia Lake flows over the spillway at the dam.

B.

No person shall launch or operate any motorized vessel or motorized vehicle on the ice of Columbia Lake except by special permit from the Board of Selectmen.

C.

No person shall launch or operate any piloted aircraft on or cause any aircraft to take off or land upon the waters of Columbia Lake except in an emergency. The use of drones is prohibited over Columbia Lake by the Department of Energy and Environmental Protection (DEEP) who manage the waters unless specifically authorized by the DEEP Commissioner in a Special Use License.

D.

Unless otherwise permitted by Section 190-5, no person shall launch or operate a motorboat for commercial use on or under the waters of Columbia Lake.

E.

Recreational vessels that can be launched on the waters of Columbia Lake shall be restricted to rowboats, sailboats, kayaks, nonmotorized paddle boats, canoes, sailboards, paddle boards, motorboats, pontoon boats, electric boats, electric kayaks, jet boats and jet skis known as personal watercraft (PWC's). Vessels already launched prior to November 2, 2023 must possess a valid, posted exemption sticker per Section 190-6 I.

F.

Recreational vessels which may not be launched include without limitation, houseboats, vessels with an enclosed cabin, radio or remote-controlled vessels, vessels containing temporary or permanent sleeping arrangements, vessels with any toilet facility and jetted articulated vessels (JAV). Vessels already launched prior to November 2, 2023 must possess a valid, posted exemption sticker per Section 190-6 I.

G.

No person shall discharge from or while using any vessel any sewage, treated or untreated, or any waste derived from sewage.

H.

Any vessel exceeding 26 feet in length as listed on its original title, is prohibited to launch on the lake. Vessels exceeding the 26 feet limit prior to November 2, 2023 must possess a valid, posted exemption sticker per Section 190-6 I.

I.

The Town of Columbia Board of Selectmen may permit any vessel that had been regularly and validly launched on Columbia Lake prior to November 2, 2023 and that does not meet the criteria listed in Subsections E, F & H of this Section to continue to be launched on Columbia Lake. In order to continue to be launched on the Lake, any and all such vessels must possess a currently valid and visibly posted exception sticker specifically approved by the Board of Selectmen indicating that the vessel has been found to have been legally 'on the lake' before November 2, 2023 with no subsequent change in ownership.

J.

The practice of wake jumping by any vessel shall be prohibited. For the purpose of this subsection, "wake jumping" means the maneuvering of a vessel within 100 feet of another vessel's stern and in its wake so as to jump or cause the overtaking vessel to become airborne over the vessel's wake.

§ 190-7 Penalties for Offenses.

Any person or vessel that violates any provision of this article shall if applicable terminate the current voyage at the request of a Marine Patrol Officer and may be fined \$200. Any such violation which is of a continuing nature shall be deemed a separate violation each time it occurs. Each day a violation continues shall be deemed a new occurrence. If any operating violation is deemed to be reckless or if ongoing operating violations continue in such a fashion that continued violations are deemed to be evidence of reckless disregard of an applicable provision of this ordinance, the Board of Selectmen acting in conjunction with the Connecticut State Police, reserves the right to prohibit the violator from operating the vessel or any similar vessel on the lake for a designated period of time not to exceed one year.

§ 190-8 When effective.

The provisions of this article shall take effect in accordance with § 15-136 of the Connecticut General Statutes. (Date Effective After DEEP & Town Board of Selectmen Approvals)

§ 190-9 Severability. If any provision of this article or its application to any person or circumstance is held invalid, such invalidity shall not affect any other provision or application hereof.