

**Summary of Proposed Revisions to Columbia Lake Town Ordinances**  
**Public Hearing ~ Tuesday, April 16, 2024, at 6:30 PM**  
**Columbia, CT Town Hall**

**Introduction**

The review and revision process for the three Columbia Lake town ordinances has been nearly a year-long effort involving the Lake Management Advisory Commission (LMAC), the Board of Selectmen (BOS), our Lake Consultant, TRC, and the Connecticut Department of Energy and Environmental Protection (DEEP). The focus of the work has been to limit revisions to those necessary to protect public health, safety, and welfare, and to address environmental concerns. In doing so, every effort has been made to maintain a balance between safely using the lake for recreational purposes while protecting water quality and the lake ecosystem.

Columbia Lake is relatively small and shallow as a 281-acre waterbody with an average depth of 14'. Horsepower, hours of operation, restricted watercraft, certain recreational activities, areas of operation and the like have been historically regulated by the Town and have resulted in what most believe to be a lake where public health and safety of all users are respected, and the general welfare of the Town and all lake users has been enhanced. These considerations are key factors in the revisions being proposed to the Ordinance Sections and include addressing the pressures being put on the lake by recreational activities that are currently permitted, by new recreational activities, and by the need for clarification of existing ordinances.

In addition, as a result of data collected for Columbia Lake as well as from data, studies, and experiences at other lakes, LMAC recognizes that threats to the environmental quality of Columbia Lake are present from expansion of existing permitted uses and by certain possible new uses. Thus, environmental concerns were factored into many of the proposed revisions.

Finally, experience has shown that some existing provisions have caused confusion or have not addressed their initial purpose as well as they should. Hence, some of the proposed revisions are intended to add clarity, understanding and awareness with respect to existing provisions.

A summary of the key revisions follows.

**Town Ordinance Key Revisions:**

**Definition Revisions** – Definitions have been revised to be consistent with the 2024 CT Boating Safety Enforcement Manual as well as clarify as needed.

**Article II – Proposed Revisions to Vessels on Columbia Lake Town Ordinance**

- Section Number Updates Based on Revisions to Ordinance
- Section 190-6 Prohibiting Certain Use of Columbia Lake, Sections D to I: Vessels 26 feet or longer will no longer be allowed on the lake. Vessels over this length that were on the lake prior to November 2, 2023 will be grandfathered.
- Section 190-7 Penalties for Offenses: The dollar amount of the penalty has been increased from \$50 to \$200 per offense and provisions made for stronger enforcement of violations.
- Other revisions reflect clarifying language to better understand the content of each section.

## **Summary of Proposed Revisions to Columbia Lake Town Ordinances**

### **Page 2**

#### **Article III – Proposed Revisions to Safety Regulations on Columbia Lake:**

- Section Number Updates Based on Revisions to Ordinance
- Section 190-13 Regulations of Motorboats on Columbia Lake, Subsections C & D: There is no change to the current horsepower limits allowed on the lake. Current procedures are documented: engine modifications are prohibited; conversion of other power specifications to horsepower is outlined; and motorboats will be allowed only one engine with the exception of a trolling motor.
- Section 190-14 Waterskiing Regulations Subsections C & G: Up to three water-skiers will now be allowed. Vessels involving an airborne or underwater component that is part of a vessel or otherwise used with the vessel will not be allowed.
- Section 190-15 Restricted and Limited Areas:
  - Subsection B of the current ordinance that allowed the BOS to approve marking devices to be placed on Columbia Lake waters is deleted. Similar to Subsection A, which remains, as well as slalom courses, parades and regattas, the BOS will obtain a permit from DEEP if and when needed to place additional markers on the lake.
  - Subsections C and D outlines the Slow-No-Wake CT boating regulations for motorboats within 100 feet and personal watercrafts within 200 feet of shore, docks, etc.
- Section 190-17 Penalties for Offenses: Same as Article II and IV.
- Other revisions reflect clarifying language to better understand the content of each section.

#### **Article IV – Proposed Revisions to Conduct at the Town Beach**

- Section Number Updates Based on Revisions to Ordinance
- Section 190-23 Penalties for Offenses: Same as Articles II and III.
- Other revisions reflect clarifying language to better understand the content of each section.

Please recognize that this Summary of Proposed Revisions to the Columbia Lake Town Ordinances is intended to provide only an overview of the revisions. It is not a complete summary. A review of this summary is not a reasonable substitute for a full reading of the revised ordinances.