

# One lake, one standard, on both sides of the line

Hartwell's permanent target is now 656 feet, and the lake will not be allowed back to 660 for the better part of a decade. We are asking South Carolina and Georgia for one standard on one lake, with wake enhancement where the water is wide enough and deep enough to absorb it.

|                                                                                                  |                                                                                         |                                                                                            |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <div>500</div> <div>FEET FROM SHORE</div> <div>While ballast, wedges or shapers are in use</div> | <div>20</div> <div>FEET OF DEPTH</div> <div>Measured at the lake level of the day</div> | <div>1/4</div> <div>MILE OF WIDTH</div> <div>What a reach needs to hold the standard</div> |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|

## The request

- 1. 500 feet.** No wake enhancement within 500 feet of any shoreline, dock, pier, bulkhead, moored vessel or person in the water.
  - 2. 20 feet of depth.** No wake enhancement in water shallower than 20 feet, measured at the level of the day.
  - 3. Big water only.** The main body of the lake, where the standard can physically be met, and not the narrow upper arms where it cannot.
  - 4. The rule covers the mode, not the boat.** Ballast tanks and bags, wedges, mechanical fins, aftermarket shapers, or sustained bow-high plowing to build a surfable wave. A boat on plane at cruising speed, with none of that in use, is not covered.

**This is not a ban.** Wakesurfing and wakeboarding stay legal on Lake Hartwell. The main body is wide enough and deep enough to hold the standard, and that is where most of the sport already happens. No one's boat becomes illegal: the standard is about how and where a boat is operated, not what anyone owns or what they are towing.

## Why the third point needs no map

A buffer off the near bank, a usable lane, and a buffer off the far bank is arithmetic.

500 + 200 + 500 = 1,200 ft

Roughly a quarter mile, bank to bank. The 200 ft lane is the minimum zone width Vermont adopted in its own rule.

This is a policy calculation, not a hydrodynamic one. Any reach narrower than about a quarter mile cannot physically hold the standard, so a chart decides where the rule applies rather than an argument. Going north on the Tugaloo arm above the Interstate 85 bridge, the channel does not have the room.

## Why now

On 26 August 2026 the Corps set Hartwell's year-round guide curve at **656 feet** because of seepage at the Clemson Lower Diversion Dam Saddle Dike. The Corps is not draining the lake, and today's low water is drought. What changed is the ceiling: **the permanent summer target is now 656, one foot above the armoring floor.** The safety study takes up to two years, then design, funding and construction. The Corps estimates five to ten years or more.

The Corps' bank stabilization form states that **"in no instance will materials be placed below 655' msl elevation."** That governs where stone may be placed, not working conditions, so a dry bank does not make it permissible.

|                          | OLD<br>660 TARGET | EST. 4 FT<br>LOWER |
|--------------------------|-------------------|--------------------|
| Median May–Sep elevation | 658.15            | 654.15             |
| Summer days below 655 ft | 24.9%             | 56.1%              |
| Summers with such a day  | 10/22             | 19/22              |
| Margin, target to floor  | 5.0 ft            | 1.0 ft             |

USGS gauge 02187010, 7,726 daily readings, 2005-03-05 to 2026-09-21. The right column is **an estimate, not a forecast**: the same historical shortfalls applied to a target four feet lower. Some summers already reached the floor (24.9% of days); the new target makes that the typical summer day. As of 2026-09-21 the lake stood at 649.39 ft, 5.6 ft below the floor.

Where the two numbers come from

| JURISDICTION OR STUDY                                                                                                                                                                                                            | DISTANCE   | DEPTH | STANDING                                                                        |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------|-------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Macfarlane (2025), <i>River Research and Applications</i>                                                                                                                                                                        | 350–500 ft | —     | Peer reviewed. States that 200 ft "would be inadequate."                        |
| St. Anthony Falls Lab, Report 611 (2025)                                                                                                                                                                                         | —          | 20 ft | Direct recommendation. Resuspension confirmed at 14 ft.                         |
| Vermont, Use of Public Waters Rules                                                                                                                                                                                              | 500 ft     | 20 ft | In force.                                                                       |
| Michigan DNR, Fisheries Report 37 (2023)                                                                                                                                                                                         | 500 ft     | 15 ft | State agency recommendation.                                                    |
| Maine, 12 M.R.S. § 13001                                                                                                                                                                                                         | 300 ft     | 15 ft | In force statewide since Aug 2024.                                              |
| Lake Hartwell, what we ask                                                                                                                                                                                                       | 500 ft     | 20 ft | Plus big water only, so the standard is achievable where it applies.            |
| South Carolina today, § 50-21-870(B)(9)                                                                                                                                                                                          | 200 ft     | —     | Docks, piers, bulkheads, moored vessels, people. <b>Shoreline not included.</b> |
| On the South Carolina side, a residential bank with no dock on it has no wake surf protection at all. Across the state line, the identical conduct is a violation. Both statutory texts are quoted in full in the sources below. |            |       |                                                                                 |
| Georgia today, OCGA § 52-7-13.1                                                                                                                                                                                                  | 200 ft     | —     | Includes shoreline next to residences, parks, beaches, marinas.                 |

**Measured on Georgia water.** An instrumented study on Lake Rabun and Lake Burton found surf-mode wave energy at 100 feet from shore running **2,546 percent above** the monthly maximum wind wave energy at the same site, and still **679 percent above** at 500 feet. Its recommended buffer for wakesurfing was 450 feet.

Sources

- USACE Savannah District, Release 26-029 and the Hartwell Lake Level Restrictions FAQ, 26 August 2026. sas.usace.army.mil
- USACE Hartwell SC Bank Stabilization Application, Shoreline Management, Hartwell Project Office.
- Macfarlane, G.J. (2025). "Wakesurfing, Wakeboarding, and Waterskiing: A Comparison of Wake Characteristics." *River Research and Applications*. Open access. doi.org/10.1002/rra.4438
- Riesgraf, A., Marr, J., Herb, W., Lueker, M. & Kozarek, J. (2025). *A Field Study of Recreational Powerboat Hydrodynamics and their Impacts on the Water Column and Lakebed*. St. Anthony Falls Laboratory Report 611, University of Minnesota. hdl.handle.net/11299/274184
- Marr, J. et al. (2022). SAFL Project Report 600, University of Minnesota. hdl.handle.net/11299/226190
- Michigan DNR Fisheries Division (2023). *A Literature Review of Wake Boat Effects on Aquatic Habitat*. Fisheries Report 37.
- Water Environment Consultants (2021). *Boat Wake Impact Analysis: Lake Rabun and Lake Burton, Georgia*. Prepared for the Lake Rabun Association and Lake Burton Civic Association.
- Vermont Agency of Natural Resources, Use of Public Waters Rules, Section 3.7, as amended 11 June 2026.

**Keep the Wake Off the Bank** is a volunteer effort by Lake Hartwell residents. We are not affiliated with the Army Corps of Engineers, SCDNR, GA DNR or the Lake Hartwell Association. Every figure on this page is drawn from a published source listed above. If anything here is wrong, tell us and we will correct it.

**Savannah District public inbox for the Hartwell pool restriction:** CESAS-HartwellPoolRestriction@usace.army.mil · **Live lake elevation:** USGS gauge 02187010