

## **Case 15.**

For nearly 40 years, the young residents of Don Jean Bay have performed as members of a water-ski team. The Lauderdale Aqua Skiers practice their jumps, spins, pyramids, and other maneuvers 4 –7pm Wednesdays and Fridays, with 3pm practice before the 6pm Saturday show. During the show, and at some practices, music blares over the lake.

Until 1999, the team launched from land owned by a private individual. When the land was sold, the team moved its practice site to nearby Elkhorn Lake, but continued to use Don Jean Bay for practices and performances on a more limited basis. The following year, the Lauderdale Lakes Lake Management District Board purchased the old launch site, and the team continued to split its practices and performances between the two lakes. In 2003, Elkhorn Lake Council decided to forbid powerboats on the lake, and the team began to use Don Jean Bay exclusively once again.

Long-time residents value the team as a healthy tradition involving generations of family members. The approximately 80 skiers represent about 55 families, some of whom are fourth generation ski-team members. Ski team is not just a summer sport, but a year-round activity, with the winter months devoted to making costumes and raising money, and the summer to practice and performance. Said Louise Meike, whose grandchildren are part of the fourth generation of Meike ski-team members "This is family."

To some homeowners the Lauderdale Aqua Skiers are an impediment to quiet weekends they envisioned when they purchased their lake homes. About 20 families, mostly newcomers, signed a petition spelling out their concerns about safety, noise, and erosion. They claim the team limits others' access to the lake, and that they venture into the no-wake zone – a claim the skiers dispute. The petition states that the jump is unsafe and that the powerful boats churn up the lake bottom, causing shoreline erosion. Petitioners object to the noise of practice sessions.

William Kochlefl, a Winnetka lawyer, and his wife Rhonda bought Don Jean Bay lake property in 1998. When the team resumed heavier use of the lake in 2004, the Kochlefls were upset with the increased noise and use. Kochlefl accused the team of violating environmental laws by launching from a site designated as a conservation area, and demanded the team's permit be withdrawn. The Lake Management District, who owns the land, told Mr. Kochlefl that the team's use of the land was appropriate within the intent of zoning laws. The LaGrange Town Board also disregarded Mr. Kochlefl's concerns, telling him that team supporters outnumbered opponents. Mrs. Kochlefl responded, "I want to know why the ski team is above the law." Walworth County, however, agrees with Mr. Kochlefl that the team's use of the land violates zoning ordinances, and the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources is investigating to see if the team needs additional permits, is operating legally, or must find a new launch site.

Scott Mason, chairman of the Lauderdale Lakes Lake Management District board, voiced the opinion of long-term residents who believe newcomers are trying to change a

way of life and a community value that has existed for decades. "The ski team has been there 30 years and these folks are relatively new." But Mrs. Kochlefl disagrees, believing all property owners should have the same rights. Meanwhile, team supporters are lobbying government officials and the legislature, and the Lakes Lake Management District Board is considering rezoning to allow the team to stay on Don Jean Bay.