

Decision Framework

FOR MAKING & COMMUNICATING
DECISIONS

A guide for making and communicating decisions on behalf of the *Bluewater community*.

How to Use This Framework

This framework exists because good values alone don't make good decisions. Bluewater has a clear sense of who it is and what it stands for. This document translates that identity into a consistent process for making rules, policies, and real-time judgment calls, and for communicating them in a way the community can trust.

Work through Sections 1 through 7 in order when considering any new rule or policy. Use Section 8 for time-sensitive situations that require immediate action. The Decision Guide below tells you what to do based on what you find.

Decision Guide

What to do at each section, depending on how cleanly the answers come.

1	If you can't clearly answer Section 1. The problem hasn't been defined well enough yet.	<i>Stop. Go gather more information before the board spends any more time on it. Bring it back when you have a real answer to what problem you're solving.</i>
2	If Section 1 is clear but Section 2 is a stretch. The rule may be solving a real problem, but it isn't Bluewater's problem to solve, or it conflicts with who you've said you are.	<i>Table it or reframe it.</i>
3	If Sections 1 and 2 are solid but Section 3 raises red flags. The rule may need to be scaled back.	<i>Start with the minimum intervention that addresses the actual harm before going further.</i>
4	If Sections 1 through 3 are solid but Section 4 can't be answered. The rule can't be reliably enforced.	<i>Don't adopt the rule yet. Either solve the enforcement problem first, or consciously decide you're adopting a guideline rather than a rule and communicate it that way.</i>
5	If Sections 1 through 4 are solid but Section 5 stalls. The board can't reach genuine consensus.	<i>Don't force it. More discussion is needed. Set a deadline for when the board will revisit it and what additional input might break the logjam.</i>
6	If all five sections clear. The rule has been tested against problem, identity, proportionality, enforceability, and consensus.	<i>Adopt the rule, execute Section 6 on communication, and set a Section 7 review date before you move on.</i>



Decision Framework

SECTION 01

What Problem Are We *Actually Solving*?

- Has something happened, or are we responding to a hypothetical?
- Is this one person's concern, or a pattern across the community?
- Have we heard from the people most affected? Both those who want the rule and those who will be constrained by it.

SECTION 02

Does It Fit *Who We Say We Are*?

- Which Bluewater values does this rule protect or advance?
- Does it respect the balance between wake sports and tranquility that we've explicitly committed to?
- Does it treat the lake as belonging to all members; anglers and surfers, families and individuals; not just the loudest voices in the room?
- Would the kids learning to swim today, the homeowners of 2055, think this was a reasonable rule?

SECTION 03

Is It *Proportionate*?

- What does state law already require, and are we going beyond it?
- If we're going beyond the law, what specifically justifies that?
- Is the restriction proportionate to the actual risk or harm, or does it feel like overcorrecting?
- Are we solving for the 95% of people who behave well, or the 5% who don't?

SECTION 04

Can We *Enforce It*?

- Who is responsible for enforcement, and have they agreed to that responsibility?
- Are we relying on volunteers to confront neighbors? If so, is that realistic?
- What happens when someone violates the rule? Is there an actual consequence, or just a strongly worded newsletter item?
- If we can't enforce it consistently, does adopting it do more harm than good by creating a rule people learn to ignore?
- Would we rather not have the rule than have a rule we can't back up?



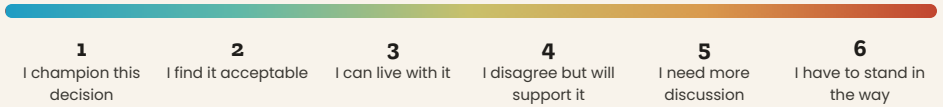


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SECTION 05

Have We Reached Genuine Consensus?

- Can every board member live with this decision, even if it wasn't their first choice?
- Is anyone blocking because they genuinely can't support it, or because they want more discussion?
- If we can't reach consensus, who makes the call, and by when?



Rather than a simple yes or no, ask each board member to place themselves on the scale above. This surfaces real disagreement quickly and keeps the conversation focused.

SECTION 06

How Will We Communicate It?

- Can we explain the "why" behind this rule in plain language to any member who asks?
- Does the communication make clear what value or safety concern it protects?
- Is there a grace period before enforcement begins, or does it take effect immediately?

SECTION 07

When Will We Review It?

- What is the review date? Ideally after one full season.
- What would we need to see to conclude the rule is working?
- What would trigger us to revisit, modify, or retire it early?
- Who is responsible for bringing the review back to the board?



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SECTION 08

Real-Time Judgment Calls

Some decisions can't wait for a full board process. Storms, safety incidents, water quality emergencies, and other time-sensitive situations require the board to act quickly, with incomplete information, on behalf of the whole community. These are judgment calls, not rule-making; they should be treated and communicated differently.

What Makes These Different

- The board is acting to protect the community, not to set permanent policy.
- The decision is temporary and condition-dependent; it ends when the situation changes.
- Speed matters more than consensus, though a quick check-in with available board members is always worth the five minutes.
- The decision will be second-guessed by people whose experience of the situation is different from what the board was seeing.

Before You Act

- What do we actually know right now, and what are we inferring?
- What is the specific harm we are trying to prevent?
- Is this decision reversible, and if so, what would trigger us to reverse it?
- Who needs to be looped in before we act, even briefly?
- **Are we acting out of genuine concern for the community, or are we reacting to pressure from the loudest voice in the room?**

How to Communicate It

01

What we saw

Describe the specific conditions that triggered the decision. Not "there was a storm" but "we had reports of dock damage in multiple coves and debris in the water across the north end of the lake." Specificity signals that you were paying attention, not just reacting.

02

What we were weighing

Name the competing interests you considered. Acknowledging the cost of the decision to the people it inconveniences, even when you're confident in the call, goes a long way toward maintaining trust.

03

What we decided

Be direct. People can disagree with a clear decision. They can't do anything with a vague one.

04

What changes it

Tell people what you're watching and what would cause you to lift or modify the decision. This is the piece most boards skip; it's the one that most reduces frustration, because it gives people a timeline and a sense that the decision isn't open-ended.

After the Fact

- Did we make the right call with the information we had, not in hindsight, but given what we knew at the time?
- Did we communicate it in a way that was transparent and respectful of the people it impacted?
- Is there anything about this situation that suggests we need a standing rule, or was this genuinely a one-time judgment call?
- Did anyone feel blindsided who should have been consulted, and how do we handle that differently next time?



Decision Framework

— IN CLOSING —

A Note on **Accountability.**

Volunteer boards making real-time calls will sometimes get it wrong.

When that happens, the response that preserves the most trust is a simple, direct acknowledgment: here's what we decided, here's what we were thinking, and here's what we'd do differently. Communities are far more forgiving of honest mistakes than of defensiveness.

The board's credibility over time comes not from being right every time, but from being transparent every time.