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**Dane County Lakes and Watershed Commission  
Rhythm and Booms Recommendations  
Adopted December 12, 2013**

Fireworks are a popular accompaniment to many community celebrations in Dane County. However they have negative environmental and public health consequences that need to be considered in event planning. Regardless of whether fireworks are launched over land or surface water, the byproducts of fireworks displays, primarily perchlorates, heavy metals, and litter, will eventually affect surface and/or ground water resources in some way.

If Rhythm and Booms is to continue, there are tradeoffs between land-based and water-based launch sites. At land-based sites, litter is more easily controlled. However, perchlorates may be more likely to reach groundwater without being broken down into less harmful compounds (most commonly chloride and water).

If Rhythm and Booms fireworks are launched over Lake Monona, the Dane County Lakes and Watershed Commission recommends the following:

Utilize low or no perchlorate fireworks – Working with a fireworks manufacturer that supplies low or no perchlorate fireworks minimizes or eliminates one potential contaminant. The Commission recognizes that such options are less-readily available. We hope that Dane County can be part of a movement to develop higher demand for such fireworks.

Make every effort to remove litter and other debris such as “duds” and “misfires” from the water – Every effort should be made to contain litter and remove it from the water. The Rhythm and Booms event clean-up plan should include a boom to prevent the spread of litter from the launch site. Boats should be deployed the night of the fireworks, as soon as it is safe to begin collecting debris from the launch site. The Lakes and Watershed Commission requests a copy of the clean-up plan annually.

Initiate monitoring - Monitoring the impacts of fireworks should be required. Development of monitoring protocols should engage, at a minimum, the City of Madison, Dane County, and the event organizer. Monitoring should address water quality, aquatic life impacts, as well as the efficacy of litter management. Other entities such as the Wisconsin DNR, the Wisconsin Geological and Natural History Survey, US Geological Survey, and local universities may also have resources and expertise to contribute. Public Health Madison and Dane County should also engage appropriate state, federal, and university experts to explore the development of monitoring protocols for heavy metal accumulations in sediment from fireworks, including the value of establishing a baseline. The Commission will examine monitoring results after the 2014 fireworks display. Longer-term engagement of the Commission on the fireworks issue will be considered as a part of the Commission’s annual prioritization process.

Obtain information on fireworks composition to inform monitoring – When available from the manufacturer, the event organizer should provide Public Health Madison and Dane County, the



Dane County Lakes and Watershed Commission and other interested parties with detailed information on the composition of fireworks to be used in Rhythm and Booms, especially heavy metals content.

Modify Rhythm and Booms slow-no-wake ordinance – Dane County should amend the Rhythm and Booms slow-no-wake boating ordinance to apply to Lake Monona.

While the above recommendations refer specifically to Rhythm and Booms, the Lakes and Watershed Commission also recommends that:

1. All fireworks displays be deliberately sited to minimize the potential for surface water, ground water and drinking water contamination.
2. Similar monitoring protocols be considered for all fireworks launched over water in Dane County.
3. Alternatives to fireworks that are friendlier to the environment and public health, such as laser shows, should be considered for community celebrations.