



## Oneida County Economic Development Corporation

### Public Comment – Wake Boat Resolution

Jeff Verdoorn – Executive Director of the Oneida County Economic Development Corporation. Our Oneida County lakes are our most important economic driver, yet we often forget just how fragile our lakes are. Most recently, Oneida County tourism generated \$362 million annually in revenue for our county and local businesses, all the while delivering \$22 million in state and local taxes. We have 12% of all employment in Oneida County coming from tourism and the \$22 million in annual tax revenue would be equivalent to 35% of the total Oneida County budget. Think about that for a second. Tourism is what drives Oneida County, **and our quality lakes drive our tourism.**

Our lakes are fragile. Only a tiny fraction of all registered boat owners are ballasted wake boats. Yet science shows that enhanced wake lakebed scouring occurs at depths less than 20-25 feet and enhanced wakes causing damage and risking personal safety take over 500 feet to subside to normal water ski wake heights, meaning 700 feet from shore minimum. One enhanced wake boat can destroy a small lake. There is also the ballast tank AIS issue that have not been solved.

Lakes in Oneida County are typically shallow – that was discussed when the amendment was made earlier at the January County board meeting. The concern of enhanced wake boaters is that as originally written, it would eliminate too many lakes from enhanced wake access. Some board members are concerned for Minocqua Economic activity, even though the listening sessions clearly showed a strong anti-enhanced wake boat sentiment in Minocqua. The reality is that we cannot destroy these lakes just for the tiny, enhanced wake boating population to recreate. Our biggest economic driver is simply too important to risk. We need regulations that are science based. Science says minimum 700 feet from shore and 20 foot deep, as well as some protection for preventing Aquatic Invasives. Thank you!