

Town of Otsego
Resolution # _____ of the year 2026
A Local Law Regulating the Operation of Wakeboard Watercraft
on Otsego Lake Within the Town of Otsego

WHEREAS, The Town Board of the Town of Otsego desires to protect the shorelines of Otsego Lake within the Town from unnecessary erosion caused by excessive wakes and waves caused by boats specifically designed or altered to create large wakes, and

Now therefore be it

Resolved, that the town board, upon motion duly made, seconded and approved by a majority of the Board, proposes to adopt the following local law “regulating the operation of wakeboard watercraft on Otsego Lake within the town of Otsego:”

Definition:

Wakeboard Boat: A wakeboard boat is a motorized wake enhancement watercraft that can also be referred to as a bladder boat, ballast boat, surfboard boat or wake boat. It is a monohull motorboat that can be artificially filled with water for added weight in cavities or ballast tanks designated to hold water or weighted with material on or in the monohull and/or uses hydraulically controlled devices or any other attachment(s) intended for the sole purpose of increasing the size and/or output of a boat's wakes, whether empty, full of water or weighted in some other manner. This definition does not include boats with wells intended solely to store fishing bait, or live wells for the purpose of holding live fish.

Prohibition: No person shall operate a wakeboard boat on Otsego Lake within the Town of Otsego, Otsego County, New York. The creation of any wave exceeding twelve (12) inches from trough to crest shall constitute prima facie evidence of excessive wakes, or one having damaging capability.

Penalties: A violation of this local law shall be punishable by a fine of up to \$100.00 for a first offense, \$250.00 for a second offense within two (2) years, and \$500.00 for a third offense within two (2) years.

Enforcement. The Town Board authorizes the Town of Otsego Code Enforcement Officer to issue an appearance ticket under this local law. Such authorization shall not prevent any law enforcement officer of the State of New York from enforcing compliance with this local law.

Effect. This local law shall take effect immediately upon filing with the Secretary of State.

And be it further Resolved, that the clerk is directed to forward a copy of this proposed law, along with the SEQR forms Pt 1, 2 and 3 with Narratives, as well as the GML 239-m referral to the Otsego County Planning Department,

And be it further Resolved, that a public hearing on this matter is set for 6:45 pm on July 8, 2026, and the clerk is directed to provide appropriate and required publication of the information about this proposed local law and public hearing in a timely manner.

SEQR. PART 1. NARRATIVE. Wakeboard boat local law

The proposed action described in this SEQR review is the adoption of a local law outlawing wakeboard, sometimes known as wake surf boats on the portion of Otsego Lake within the town of Otsego. This action will not create a negative impact on the environment, but will in fact create a positive impact on the health of Otsego Lake and its watershed.

If this local law is adopted, the town of Otsego will be joining a number of other lakeside communities in New York, where wakeboard boats are being banned or restricted because of the massive, artificially enhanced waves they produce. These large wakes cause significant shoreline erosion, disrupt aquatic ecosystems, damage spawning habitats with intense propeller turbulence, and create hazardous conditions for smaller boats like kayaks.

Otsego Lake has already been experiencing toxic Algal blooms since 2022 as well as other disruptions of Lake health. It is hoped that removing wakeboard boats from the lake will be one of the steps towards slowing Shoreline erosion, and potentially repairing the disruption that is currently ongoing to aquatic ecosystems of the lake.

The town of Otsego has been asked by representatives from SUNY Oneonta, Biological Field Station, the Otsego Lake Association, and the Otsego Lake watershed supervisory committee to join other Lakeside communities, the town of Springfield, the town of Middlefield and the village of Cooperstown in adopting this local law outlawing wakeboard boats.