

WISCONSIN ASSOCIATION OF LAKES

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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LAKE GROUP FILES NOTICE IN ONEIDA COUNTY ZONING DISPUTE

The state's largest lake protection group filed a legal notice with Oneida County today concerning a Shoreland Zoning Ordinance amendment enacted by the County Board last October. The filing takes a preliminary step toward a possible legal challenge to the amendment, which the Wisconsin Association of Lakes (WAL) believes violates the State's Navigable Waters Protection Law.

WAL President Roger Walsh said the group's action is based on provisions of the amended ordinance that fall short of minimum standards for County Shoreland Zoning Ordinances that have been in place for decades.

State rules require that buildings generally be set back at least 75 feet from the water. The County's amendment badly weakened two provisions restricting construction close to the water's edge. One eliminated curbs on the expansion and repair of some 'grandfathered' structures built at least 40 feet from the water. Another would expand circumstances where new buildings can be built closer than 75 feet from the water by broadly defining an 'existing pattern of development.'

"Since the late 1960's, Wisconsin has consistently required that buildings be set back from lakeshores. This policy has been good for lakes and water quality and for private property values," Walsh said. "Since this law was put in place, property values on Wisconsin lakes have increased dramatically. Its just plain wrong to say that shoreland zoning has hurt property values. And at the same time, it has protected water quality and helped maintain Wisconsin's edge in attracting tourism."

A State advisory committee is currently reviewing the statewide standards for shoreland zoning ordinances. "We agree that some changes in the statewide standards are necessary," Walsh said. "One of the key areas that needs to be reviewed is the

treatment of nonconforming structures, that is, buildings built before the setbacks were in effect. But these issues need to be considered and revised on a statewide basis. In the meantime, Oneida County should comply with the existing law.”

The Wisconsin Association of Lakes, Inc., is a statewide organization whose purpose is to preserve and protect Wisconsin inland waters, their watersheds and ecosystems. The Association's membership includes individuals, businesses and lake management organizations, including lake associations, public lake and sanitary districts, cities, counties, villages and towns. Its members include recreational boaters, fisherman and other lake users and thousands of the lake property owners subject to shoreland zoning regulations.

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