Discussion Paper

Recreational Carrying Capacity

It is an imperative direction in the Official Plan that all development on the Township's lakes must protect, improve, or restore the quality of water in the lakes, as well as protect the social experiences of those people using the lakes. Recreational carrying capacity is a fundamental facet of protecting water quality.

Provincial Policy

The Provincial Policy Statement (PPS) and the Growth Plan for Northern Ontario provide direction on specific issues. The Township Official Plan must conform to the PPS which sets out the following policies:

Long-term Protection

Natural features and areas shall be protected for the long term. Development and site alteration shall not be permitted in significant wetlands; and development and site alteration shall not be permitted in significant woodlands, significant valleylands, significant wildlife habitat, and significant areas of natural and scientific interest, unless it has been demonstrated that there will be no negative impacts on the natural features or their ecological functions.

Quality and Quantity of Water

Protection, improvement, and restoration of the quality and quantity of water shall be achieved through, among other approaches, using the watershed as the ecologically meaningful scale for integrated and long-term planning, identifying water resource systems, maintaining linkages among water resource systems including shoreline areas, and ensuring consideration of environmental lake capacity.

Current Township Policies

The Township has a three-pronged approach to lake capacity which includes: water quality, visual quality, and recreational quality. The current Official Plan contains a policy section regarding Lake Capacity (Section B.3), which is subdivided into Recreational Water Quality, Lake Trout Lakes, Recreational Carrying Capacity, Lake Plans and Strategies, and Watershed Management.
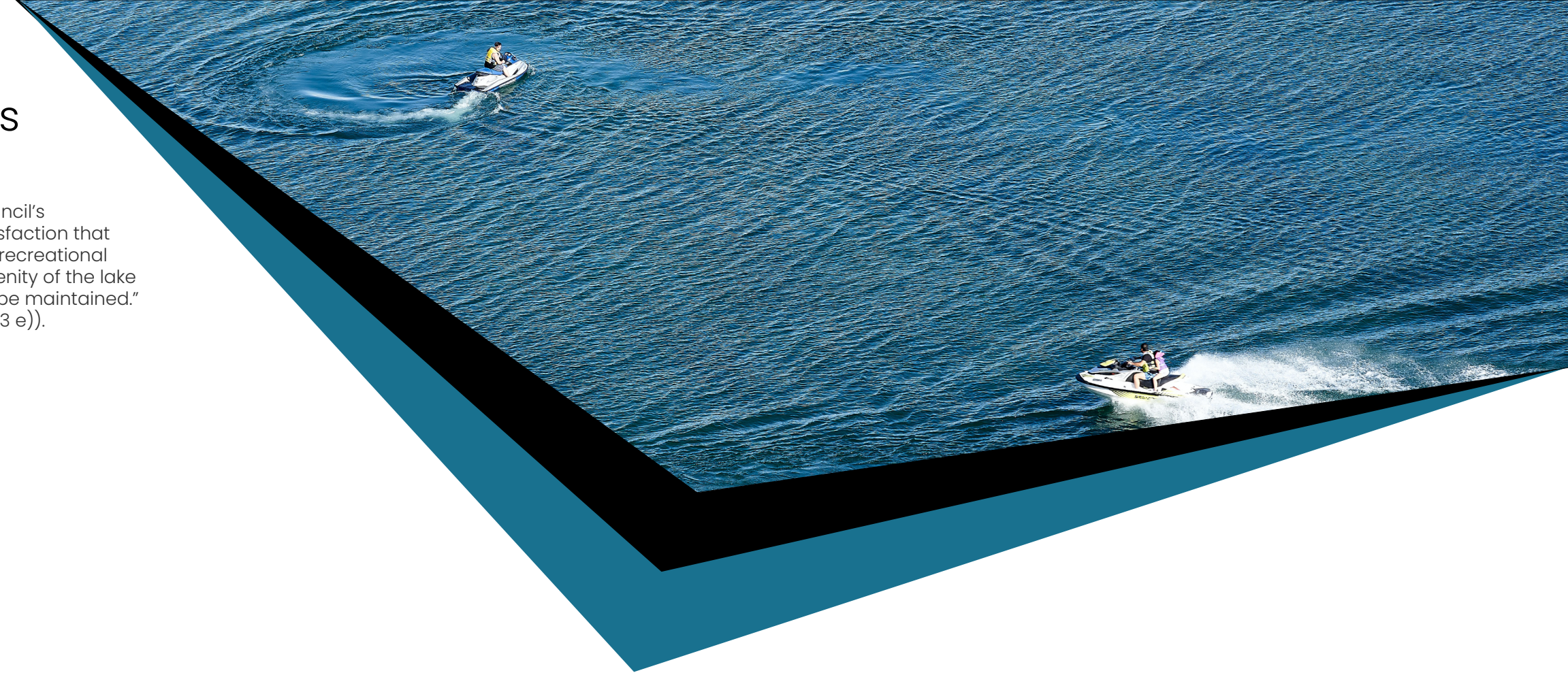
Regarding Recreational Carrying Capacity, Section B.3.3 of the Official Plan provides that:

"Recreational carrying capacity is an estimate of

the number of users that can be

accommodated on the surface of a lake while

maintaining the recreational amenity of the

waterbody. Recreational carrying capacity is

based on the principle that the lake functions as

a common space. For this reason, estimates of

recreational carrying capacity shall be based on

the size of the lake, the number of units

surrounding the lake and the public access

points that exist. Dwellings, tourist units and

campsites are considered to impact the lake

from a recreational perspective." (B.3.3 a)).

Guidelines for calculation of Recreational Carrying Capacity are based on net surface area of the lake, and density of residential and tourist accommodation units permitted in that area (B.3.3 b)).

There are also provisions stating that limitations may be placed on the size of docks, public access, or use of power boats. Further, there are provisions limiting new development on lakes larger than 40 hectares which would be overcapacity in accordance with Appendix III (Recreational Capacity of Lakes). The Official Plan recognizes that recreational boating impacts on smaller lakes may be less than impacts on larger lakes, and accordingly, on lakes less than 40 hectares in size, "development in excess of the capacity identified in Appendix III may be permitted, provided it is demonstrated to

Council's satisfaction that the recreational amenity of the lake will be maintained." (B.3.3 e)).

What changes would you like to see?

Your opinion matters! Visit the Official Plan Website to give your input on what changes you would like to see by answering the questions below on the forum or private comment.

1. Are you satisfied with the current definition for Recreational Carrying Capacity? What could be improved?

2. Are there other elements of carrying capacity that should be considered?

3. Is carrying capacity the best way to address the utilization and development density on lakes?

4. How should smaller lakes with less than 40 hectares of area be better protected through policy?