

## What cottage owners need to know

Owning and developing shoreline property comes with responsibility and with risk. These areas are prone to such problems as erosion and flooding. When waterfront properties are altered by landscaping or installing docks, decks or stairs, owners need to consider options that lessen the impact on the shoreline.

Shorelines are protected by *The Environmental Protection Act, 2010*. Under this act, if you are planning any work near a waterbody that involves:

- Altering the bed, bank or boundary
- Remove or add any material to the bed, bank or boundary
- Remove vegetation from the bed bank or boundary

you **must** apply for an Aquatic Habitat Protection Permit from the Water Security Agency prior to any work being done. This may include work such as removing vegetation from the shoreline, adding a rock stabilization treatment or sand to the lake front, lake access trails etc. Failure to acquire the necessary permits may result in fines and/or you may be required to remove the development and restore the area back to its previous state.

### Natural Shorelines

Natural shorelines are richly diverse habitats and an integral part of a functioning lake ecosystem. The abundant aquatic vegetation found there not only provides important habitat for fish and other aquatic species, but also acts as erosion control to protect shorelines from ice and wave action. Trees, shrubs and grasses found along a bank also protect the shoreline and provide wildlife habitat. When these areas are disturbed by development, they no longer provide erosion protection and valuable habitat may be lost. Many cottage subdivisions now have a dedicated reserve land between the lots and the bed of the water body. These lands provide public access to the water and are an important buffer area between developments and the lake.

### Importance of a Natural Shoreline

There are many ways to limit or avoid the loss of your shoreline. One the most effective and easiest ways is to take a “do nothing” approach. This allows natural vegetation to grow or become re-established. A

natural shoreline has many benefits, such as, stabilizing the shoreline, filtering undesirable runoffs such as septic seepage, fertilizers, pesticides and spilled chemicals and supplying food, shade, cover and critical spawning areas for fish. Break walls or retaining walls are temporary, artificial fixes that require ongoing maintenance and disrupt the natural shoreline.

### Building Sand Beaches

Many cottage owners want to have their own beach and although it may appear to be an “improvement” to their property it can actually have major impacts to a waterbody. During a rain storm or when waves crash on the shore, sand is washed into the water and can smother more productive habitat, bottom dwelling aquatic insects and fill the small spaces between rocks and gravel that shelter fry and small fish.

### Applying for a Permit

Before any work is done an Aquatic Habitat Protection Permit must be obtained by contacting the Water Security Agency or filling out the application online at [www.wsask.ca](http://www.wsask.ca). Additional information shoreline development can also be located on the website.

### Reporting Illegal Shoreline Alterations

If you suspect work is being done without proper permits please contact your local Conservation Officer or **call the Turn-in-Poachers line at 1-800-667-7461 or Sasktel Cell at #5555**.

