

The Uniqueness of Shoreline Living

We marvel at our fortune of living on such a beautiful piece of the earth and for some only dream about.

We ponder about extending our dock, paving our driveway or maybe building a gazebo down by the water. We beautify our property, we fertilize to have lush green grass down to the water's edge. We've worked hard to clear the trees, bushes and native grasses so we have a clear view of the evening sunsets glistening on the water.



The edge where land and water meet is one of the richest most productive ecological zones on earth. That is why shorelines are called "the ribbon of life". Some call them "corridors of blue and green – with the value of gold" because they are so important to our economy.

Shoreline lands often slope and need special attention when building steps, stairs, paths and roads. Shorelines are often on the receiving end of drainage and seepage from uphill. They often have wetter soils which are more easily compacted and damaged than upland soils. Shoreline banks and bluffs can be dynamic and subject to natural changes. They have a tendency to erode because of both slope and the action of water and wind over exposed stretches of water. Surface water is quickly and directly affected by pollution from sources such as poorly placed and unmaintained septic systems, fertilizer (nitrate, phosphates), driveway runoff and lawn and garden pesticides. Shoreline properties can be susceptible to the effects of storms and flooding.

While our shorelines are different and fragile, we haven't always treated them with care. Because it feels good to be near the water, we have tended to build close to it, relying upon our human ability to use technology to surmount nature's awesome power to erode and flood.

But.....the water stinks, it's full of green stinky algae, in the spring our lakes are brownish and material is floating by which resembles raw sewage! Eutrophication, a process whereby a body of water becomes richer in nutrients such as phosphorus and nitrogen, is a natural process and is common to prairie lakes. The process can be dramatically accelerated, however, by activities such as the erosion of soil into the water and runoff can increase the concentration of nutrients in the lakes.

What can we do? Find your buffer zone! Buffers help purify water by filtering toxic substances like fertilizers, pesticides, bacteria, metals and septic leachate, runoff



from roads, fields, yards before they reach the water body. Vegetation helps keep water clear by trapping soil particles in runoff.

The roots of riparian and aquatic buffer vegetation act like “rebar” in concrete, to reinforce soil and sand and help hold them together. Buffers help prevent land loss by protecting your bank or shoreline from slumping or being washed away. The leaves of plants reduce the energy of waves and currents, break the force of falling rain and slow water as it runs downhill.

Shoreline properties are commonly on the receiving end of drainage, the more vegetation cover, the more your property will benefit!



Did you know one pound of phosphorous can produce up to 500 pounds of aquatic plant or algae growth once it washes into a lake? A healthy buffer zone can help prevent algal blooms!

It's easy for us to point fingers at one another, but we all have to do our part in protecting our water quality for us, for our grandchildren and their children.