



## Shoreline Improvement Tips

### **Shoreline Buffers**

A minimum buffer depth of 10 metres (30 feet) is generally recommended, although if your property can accommodate it, more is always better!

A shoreline buffer is a strip of trees, shrubs and grasses that line the edge of a waterway. Shoreline buffers are extremely important for many reasons, as they:

- Intercept contaminants (manmade or natural) such as sediments, fertilizers and pesticides from reaching the water. Contaminants reduce water quality and can harm fish and wildlife habitat
- Prevent erosion of banks. Erosion can allow sediments and nutrients to enter a lake which can lead to accelerated growth of algae and aquatic plants, reduce clarity, abrade fish gills, smother fish eggs and more
- Offer habitat for fish by shading and cooling the water
- Provide protective cover for birds, mammals and other wildlife that feed, breed and rear young near water

If you would like to expand your buffer, you can:

- Allow natural vegetation to re-establish on its own near the shore
- Plant native trees and shrubs to create a buffer

### **Hardened Structures**

In the past it was common practice to install retaining walls as a way to prevent shoreline erosion. However, we are now aware of the damage these structures can cause to the environment as they actually cause erosion, scour the lake bottom sediment and eliminate shoreline habitat.

Restoring some of the natural buffer around and behind the wall can help prevent erosion and help restore some of the land connectivity between the land and water that is crucial to our native species.

If you have a hardened structure and need to replace it consider using angular rock, placed on the shore at a gentle angle to absorb and deflect waves and boat wake. The porous spaces between the rocks will provide areas for plants to eventually take root.



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### **Natural Features**

Natural features such as fallen trees and branches on your shoreline and in the water, overhanging trees, dead standing trees, rock piles and aquatic vegetation provide important habitat for wildlife. For instance:

- Turtles use logs to bask on
- Fish use underwater branches and logs to hide from predators and to lay eggs
- Overhanging vegetation shades and cools the water where fish search for food and spawn
- Logs on land provide essential habitat for small mammals, toads and salamanders
- Dead standing trees and cavity trees are used by many birds and mammals to create nests, raise young and provide food

If you have any of these features on your shoreline property, and if it's safe to do so, consider leaving them to help your local wildlife!

### **Septic Systems**

Malfunctioning septic systems are among the greatest polluters of our lakes. When they don't function properly, they leach phosphates and nitrates into nearby lakes and groundwater and contribute to:

- Decreased water quality
- Algal blooms
- Fish kills

If you have a septic system consider these points to keep it functioning properly:

- Septic systems are meant to control human waste. Do not add food, grease or other non-human waste to your systems
- Do not use additives and toxic cleaners
- Have your septic system pumped every three to five years and have it checked regularly to prevent expensive repairs