

Caring for Your Lakes, was featured in the 2005/2006 Freshwater Fishing Synopsis

Caring For Your Lake

Fish Habitat, Water Quality and Shoreline Development: A Reminder for Lakeshore Property Owners

As a lakeshore property owner, you may have considered making changes to the waterfront and **foreshore** areas of your property. The most common changes are clearing, adding fill and building retaining walls. Unfortunately such "improvements" are not always good for the lake's inhabitants, especially when you add up changes around the entire lake.

Work along the shoreline may damage the lake's aquatic habitat and water quality, or cause your own shoreline to start to erode. It's also important that you understand the laws that govern such work.

What is the Impact of Lakeshore Property Development?

Removing **riparian** vegetation may cause shoreline erosion and run-off, both of which could pollute the lake. Infilling your beach with sand may be illegal and may even destroy fish "nurseries" (spawning and fish rearing habitat). Removing aquatic plants will leave less cover and food for fish. Toxic seepage from septic fields and run-off containing fertilizers, herbicides, etc., will also damage water quality. Retaining walls may shift erosion problems elsewhere.

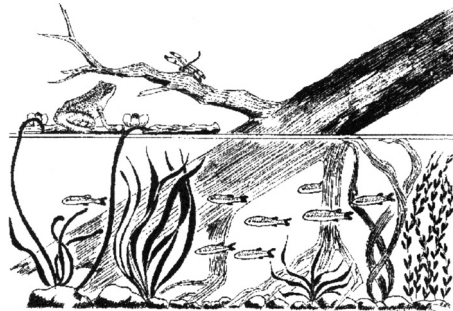
Fish Habitat

Did you know that most fish depend heavily on cover for feeding and safety? The three shoreline areas which provide important fish habitat are:

Riparian Vegetation: Trees, shrubs, grass and other plants around the edges of the lake prevent erosion; reduce run-off; and provide shade, a source of insects, and overhead cover.

Vegetated Shoal Areas: These shallow, protected foreshore areas are usually the most productive parts of the lake. They are nutrient-rich and home to aquatic plants, shrimp, snails, insects, and small fish. They are the dining rooms of many game fish.

Shallow Stony Aquatic Habitat: Gravel, cobbles or large stones near the shore are important spawning areas. For successful spawning, fish eggs and fry need clean stones and a good flow of cool, clean water.



How to Conserve Fish Habitat

For suggestions on how to conserve fish habitat and protect water quality during waterfront development, visit our website and download the "Lake Care" brochure at

http://wlapwww.gov.bc.ca/fw/fish/pdf/lake_care.pdf

The Living By Water Project is another excellent resource which offers services and resources for shoreline residents <http://www.livingbywater.ca>

Know the Law

Nearly all land below the high water mark (the **foreshore**) is owned by the Crown, and fish habitat is protected under the federal *Fisheries Act* and the provincial *Water Act*. Waterfront property owners convicted of damaging fish habitat have been fined and ordered to pay restoration costs.

Before you do any work in or near the water, you should contact your local authorities. Depending on the type of work, you may have to contact one or more of the following agencies:

Land and Water BC <http://www.lwbc.bc.ca> – generally for work below the high water mark

Fisheries & Oceans Canada <http://www.dfo-mpo.gc.ca/index.htm> – for work affecting fish habitat

Municipal or regional district zoning authorities – for waterfront structures

Water, Land & Air Protection – generally for work around water or structures in water.