

HABITAT MANAGEMENT AND NATURAL BEAUTY PROTECTION

(fact sheet #19 of the Shoreland Management and Lake Classification Series)

ISSUE:

Shoreland zoning may be effective, but only to a degree. Regulations which apply uniformly across the county fail to account for ecological variation occurring on individual properties along the shore landscape. Shorelands frequently consist of a complex of woodlands, wetland and upland areas, home to a variety of species. Although many shorelands are already highly developed, it is within the riparian's power to reestablish that lost habitat and create a naturally beautiful shoreline in the process.



The property owner who takes the time to become familiar with the life which inhabits the shore and near shore zones and restores the appropriate habitat:

- ❖ Will make significant headway towards protecting and restoring the natural beauty of the shoreline.
- ❖ Will gain a greater appreciation for the potential ecological richness of the shore and near shore zones.
- ❖ Will play an important role in protecting the complex network of life which sustains a healthy aquatic ecosystem.

OPTIONS:

The following ideas represent *general* concepts for a landowner's consideration as he or she contemplates habitat restoration and natural beauty protection. For specific guidance on more involved restoration projects, the property owner is strongly encouraged to seek a professional's advice and consult the references listed on the opposite page.

❖ **Maintain Existing Habitat**

Your lakeshore property may already have some significant habitat on it, such as wetlands and woodlands. These areas may be left unmanaged; if in their natural state they consist of downed trees/logs, standing dead trees and piles of stones and brush, and a mix of vegetation they are prime habitat for wildlife. Shorelines which are already well vegetated with a variety of native grasses (Big bluestem, Indian grass, Blue grama) and sedges may also be left alone.

In sum:

- **Remember that habitat may be left alone.**
- **Consider not mowing your lawn. Native grasses and sedges will soon recolonize an area and provide prime habitat for a host of wildlife.**
- **Refrain from using pesticides and other toxins which are harmful to wildlife.**

❖ **Create Habitat by Planting Vegetation for Wildlife**

Consider creating a landscape plan for your property. Plot the different areas within the shoreland zone consisting of uplands, banks, and near shore areas. Consider the types of native vegetation which are most suitable for site conditions and for certain kinds of wildlife. Consult with wildlife specialists and other professionals. For example, blackberry and elderberry provide food and cover for several kinds of cavity nesters such as chickadees and nuthatches as well as for a variety of songbirds. Bulrush, wild rice and cattail provide habitat for waterfowl, marsh birds such as bittern, coot and marsh wren as well as for fish such as pike, muskellunge and frogs and turtles.

In sum:

- **Conduct an inventory and draft a map showing soil types, slopes, existing habitat and wildlife use. Consider site conditions if you intend to plant vegetation.**
- **Consider the species of wildlife you would like to attract and plan accordingly. Often an entire community can benefit from species specific management.**
- **If planting vegetation, use native species.**

❖ **Natural Beauty Protection/Restoration**

Keep in mind that by creating habitat for wildlife you are also making progress towards maintaining a naturally beautiful shoreline. The planting of a mix of trees such as ash, walnut and pine, grasses and shrubs provides habitat for coyote, hawk and pheasant and makes for a visually appealing shoreline as well. In keeping with this natural theme, shoreline structures such as piers, sheds and dwellings should have a neutral color and/or be well screened by vegetation.

In sum:

- **Remember that a mix of trees, shrubs, grasses and sedges along the shoreline will be a pleasure to see from the water.**
- **Make an effort to make all artificial structures blend with the lake shore environment by using natural building materials and using neutral paint. Strive to keep structures concealed through the use of vegetative screening.**

References and other sources of assistance:

Dresen, Michael. 1994. Shorelandscaping. A guide for waterfront property owners. UWEX Lakes Partnership. Stevens Point.

Shoreland Best Management Practices Fact Sheets. 1996. University of Minnesota-Extension.

Best Management Practices. Fish and Wildlife Habitat Management. 1996. Ontario Ministry of Agriculture.

Dresen, Michael; Korth, Robert. 1995. Life on the Edge. UWEX Lakes Partnership. Stevens Point.

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For more information, contact your regional Department of Natural Resources lake coordinator, the Wisconsin Association of Lakes [800/542-5253] or UWEX/UW-Stevens Point [715/346-2116].