



Management of the Shore Impact Zone

Guidelines to Manage Alterations or Encroachments in the Shore Impact Zone



*The **shore impact zone** is the land located between the ordinary high-water level of a public water and a line parallel to it at a setback of 50 percent of the structure setback.*



Effective management of the shore impact zone protects fish and makes anglers happy.

Our lakes, wetlands, and streams need healthy shoreline buffers to reduce and filter runoff and increase infiltration. Therefore, it is critical to limit both alterations to natural shorelines and encroachments into shore impact zones (SIZs). Shoreline alterations should be limited to providing low-impact access to the water and to address erosion-control problems. A natural shoreline is a complex ecosystem that sustains fish and wildlife and protects the entire lake; therefore, natural landscaping with native plants is the preferred method for addressing erosion problems and for restoring a natural buffer within the SIZ.



Damages the shore ecology

Any encroachment into the shoreland area, especially the SIZ, that includes access (pathways or stairs), structures, or other land use changes should take into account the visual impacts. A well-designed natural vegetation screen will allow adequate access and use of the shoreland lot, will provide the buffering benefits as described earlier, and will preserve the natural character and beauty of the shoreline for any others recreating on the lake or river.

This lawn-to-lake setting in the foreground contrasts with the naturally vegetated shore in the background right.



The vegetation on the right reduces the energy of waves, which is a natural solution that does not carry the cost or impact of riprap seen on the left.

A necessary part of managing the shoreland areas and SIZs in your community is to promote the restoration of areas that are currently degraded. Natural shorelines are gaining acceptance as people understand that shorelines and SIZs play an important role in protecting their lakes and rivers and that these buffers can bring natural beauty to yards with minimal maintenance.

The comments in this brochure address jurisdictional matters and concerns of the DNR, Division of Waters. These comments should not be construed as support, approval, or disapproval for a particular project. Please contact your DNR Area Hydrologist to discuss issues relating to your project or this brochure.