



Vegetation Management

Vegetation Management in Shoreland Areas



The protection of natural vegetation in shoreland areas, especially along lakes and stream-banks, is critical to the affected landowner and the public. Shoreland management regulations prohibit vegetation clearing in *bluff impact zones* and *shore impact zones* and on *steep slopes* in order to protect the vegetation and soil resources on these vulnerable land areas.

Shoreland vegetation provides numerous benefits, including the following:

- Minimizes the erosive impact of raindrops.
- Reduces the velocity of *runoff*, which is important since high velocity or concentrated runoff can readily erode exposed soils.
- Traps and uses nutrients found in runoff or in the soil profile, which would otherwise degrade the shoreland water quality if they were not removed.
- Binds the soil column to deep vegetation roots to prevent or reduce the likelihood of bank and slope failure.
- Provides fish and wildlife habitat.
- Protects privacy of shoreland residents.
- Provides scenic beauty and helps screen shoreland development, thereby preserving the natural, aesthetic values of shoreland areas.

A limited number of trees and shrubs may be cleared or pruned to accommodate stairways and access paths. However, the applicable standard for such removal is that the screening of structures, vehicles, or other facilities as viewed from the water may not be substantially reduced. The above restrictions do not apply to dead or diseased vegetation, although they may be important for songbirds and other wildlife.

The local zoning office should be contacted for guidance *before* proceeding with any lakeshore alterations or removal of live vegetation.

Glossary of Terms

bluff impact zones: bluff and land located within 20 feet from the top of a bluff.

shore impact zones: land located between the water body and one-half of the structure setback.

steep slopes: land having an average slope greater than 12 percent.

runoff: precipitation or snow melt, which is not intercepted by vegetation, absorbed in soil, or evaporated, that moves over the land surface to streams, lakes, ditches, and depressions in the ground.



These pictures illustrate vegetation management in a shoreland area that is bad (above) and good (below). In the top picture, turf and the absence of a vegetative buffer allow runoff to easily follow the slope to the water. That runoff may cause erosion or carry contaminants or nutrients to the surface water. In contrast, the picture below shows a heavy vegetative buffer protecting the water. Additionally, the presence of emergent vegetation reduces the impacts of wave action on the shoreline.



The comments in this brochure address jurisdictional matters and concerns of the DNR, Division of Waters. Please contact your DNR Area Hydrologist to discuss issues relating to your project or this brochure.

