

PLANNING ON MAKING IMPROVEMENTS TO YOUR SHORELAND CABIN OR HOME PROPERTY?

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Have you just purchased your dream home or cabin on the lake or river and plan on making some changes to the lot so it allows you to do all the things you want to do? Have you owned a place on the lake or river and are just now planning to do the things to the lot that you have wanted to do for a long time? Please consider a few things when making your plans. Everything that you do on your property directly affects the lake or river since you are right next to it. Just as you want to enjoy the water, take ownership of it and call it your own. You cannot control what happens on the water, but you can control what happens on your property which drains right to the water. Why do you own a place on the lake? Is it because you enjoy nature and want to be able to sit at your "slice of heaven" and look across the lake and have in the background a somewhat natural setting with trees and grasses that blend nicely with the water? Then consider what people see when they view your place from the water or from their "slice of heaven". When you look across the lake are you hoping to be able to see retaining walls and big rocks that stick out compared to the rest of the landscape? When considering projects, think about what you currently have and if a proposed project would be duplicating what you already have and using up area that could be left natural. If you have a steep slope on your property with a flat area above it, do not mow right up to where the slope begins. Leave five to ten feet not mowed and maybe even consider planting a buffer in that area. Slowing the water down before it gets to the slope will help reduce erosion on the slope. It will also allow some of the water to infiltrate into the ground before it reaches the slope. If you mow the slope, consider not mowing it and even planting native grasses, flowers, shrubs or trees. Their long roots will help stabilize the slope. Leaving a five to ten foot buffer at the bottom of the slope will also help slow the water down before it reaches the water body.

If your shoreline is not eroding and does not have riprap on it, please consider leaving it as it is and not mowing it or adding native plants. Have the natural buffer right next to the lake and have your fire pit and sitting area behind it. Dig the fire pit into the ground so the ashes cannot be washed into the lake. Natural buffers, whether allowed to grow or planted and then maintained, contain native plants that have long roots that help hold the shoreline in place. They also filter water coming off your property and allow some of it to infiltrate the ground before it reaches the lake or river. Riprap attracts the sun and unnaturally heats up the water. It also creates a barrier between where the water and land meet. This area is called the ribbon of life as 90% of the animals live in this area. Manicured lawn and riprap greatly reduce the habitat for the animals that call this area home. Most people with shoreland property want to swim. This often means removing the "weeds" in front of their place to make for good swimming. If necessary, remove some of the "weeds" so you can swim and enjoy the water. Consider that those "weeds" are habitat for fish. If they are emergent, those "weeds" also can help hold your shoreline in place by reducing the waves that reach the bank. Down trees in the water also make good fish habitat.

By all means enjoy the shoreland property that you have worked hard to acquire. Just consider what your lot is like now and some of the things you may have planned and whether or not they are good for the body of water you enjoy. There are often ways to do what you want to and still do what is good for the lake or river. If you have any questions, please give me a call at 320-216-4242.