

S.O.S.—Save our Shorelines!

Picture the tranquility of a beautiful tree-lined lake, the lush vegetation reflecting off the water. While most of us agree that this is a beautiful scene, many of us forget that picture the minute we become the owners of the lake property. All those trees are blocking my view of the lake! And all those plants along the edge harbor mosquitoes and make it hard to get to my boat! So we clear the trees and plant a nice lawn all the way down to the water's edge. This happens over and over again until the entire lake is dotted with houses and lawns and there is no natural vegetation left.

Now let's fast forward several years into the future. Our view is of the lake weed harvesters busily working around the lake. The boat isn't used as much, because the fishing has been rather poor lately. And the latest news from the lake district is that they are raising rates because a dredging project will be starting next year. How did this happen?

Native trees and vegetation that once surrounded the lake acted as a natural buffer to keep pollutants out. When they were removed, it opened up better access, not only for the people, but for the pollution as well. The lawns that were planted were fertilized and with every rain, the fertilizer washed into the lake. The fertilizer that makes your grass grow does the same for lake plants and in no time, weed harvesters are needed to control excessive plant growth. The habitat that used to be along our shorelines for fish has been removed and fish populations suffer.

The answer is to restore as much natural shoreline as possible. Instead of clearing access to the water from property line to property line, we need to leave as much of it natural as possible and keep open only a small area for access. Native plants placed along shorelines keep pollution out and help stabilize the shoreline. The wider the un-mowed buffer is, the more effective it is at keeping out pollutants. Many local nurseries carry a wide variety of beautiful, native plants that need no fertilizers and require little maintenance. Start planning today for a new, natural look for your shoreline this year.

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