

Aquatic Plants and Lake Ecosystems

Aquatic plants along lake shorelines are important for maintaining healthy lake ecosystems. They provide habitat for fish spawning, nesting habitat for waterfowl and shorebirds, rearing sites for young fish and wildlife, and they protect shorelines from wave and wind erosion. Aquatic vegetation also performs many important biological functions that maintain lake water quality, such as filtering runoff water that enters the lake.

Lakeshore residents may wish to remove aquatic vegetation to make it easier to put in docks and piers, or to improve swimming and boating conditions. Some people think that removing aquatic plants helps to “clean up” the lake, however this is not true. Lakes that have lost significant aquatic vegetation are especially vulnerable to water quality problems including blue-green algal (cyanobacterial) blooms due to excess nutrient availability. Maintaining a natural shoreline with abundant native aquatic vegetation species is one of the best ways to ensure a healthy lake environment for everyone to enjoy.

Unauthorized Aquatic Vegetation Removal Is Illegal

Removing aquatic vegetation requires prior approval by the Government of Alberta, Department of Environment and Sustainable Resource Development. Unauthorized removal could be subject to fines and penalties. Here's what the law says:

- Under the *Public Lands Act*, it is prohibited to disturb the bed and shore of a water body without prior authorization
- Under the *Water Act*, an approval is required for an activity which affects a water body such as aquatic vegetation removal

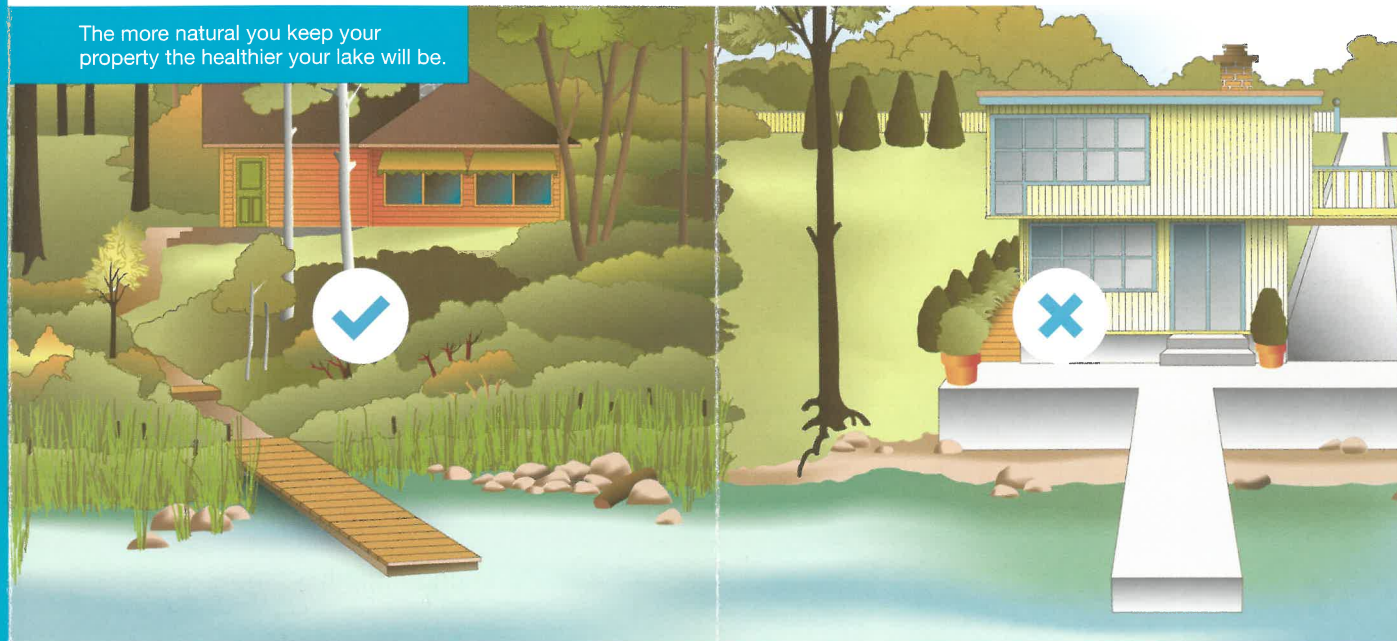
Aquatic vegetation removal may be permitted for individual use, public use or commercial purposes. Restrictions apply to ensure impact to the aquatic environment including fisheries and wildlife habitat are minimized. Application forms and guidelines can be found at www.esrd.alberta.ca (search 'Water Act Forms').

Lake Stewardship and Aquatic Vegetation

Maintaining the health of Alberta's lakes is everyone's responsibility. Actions of individual lakeshore residents, decision makers and land users around the lake add up to make a huge difference! Here's how you can do your part:

- As much as possible, leave the lake in its natural condition; let aquatic vegetation grow and enjoy the many benefits they provide
- Consider sharing docks, piers and boat lanes within your community to minimize shoreline disturbance, as well as save time and money
- Remember that general beach clean-up involving picking up plant debris that has washed up on shore is ok, but be sure to apply for an approval for any other activities involving aquatic vegetation removal
- Get involved with your local lake stewardship group to help promote beneficial management practices

The more natural you keep your property the healthier your lake will be.





Respect Our Lakes

Aquatic Vegetation and Lake Health

For More Information

For more information about lake health, lake stewardship or the authorization process:

Alberta Environment
and Sustainable Resource Development

www.esrd.alberta.ca (search 'Respect our Lakes')
ESRD.Info-Centre@gov.ab.ca

Or call: 310-ESRD

For environmental complaints/emergencies
call the 24-hour environmental hotline:

1-800-222-6514

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