

How project reviews and permits protect Wisconsin waters

Property owners want to do the right thing to protect their property values and public waters. Harm from waterway projects to habitat, clean water, recreation and scenic beauty can be avoided. Our proposed rules show them how.

Many projects are small by themselves, but if done improperly, can collectively harm lakes and rivers.

- **Reducing or removing vegetation** (downed trees, aquatic plants, native grasses, plants and shrubs) **along shorelines** to add seawalls, create beaches or grade building sites opens the door to invasive species like Eurasian watermilfoil and **eliminates**:
 - √ **Food, spawning and nursery areas for popular fish** (bluegill, bass, pike and perch).
 - √ **Nesting habitat for wildlife** such as loons, bald eagles, songbirds and frogs.
 - √ The **filtering of polluted runoff**, allowing fertilizer, other pollutants and dirt from bulldozing and other earth-moving activities to enter waterways, reduce water clarity and cover up fish spawning beds.
 - √ The **natural screening and beauty** provided by trees and shrubs at the shore.
- **Seawalls and rocks piled along the shoreline ruin habitat on the water's edge**, making it more difficult for birds to hide, eat or nest and for frogs and salamanders to climb on land.
- **Exotic pests like Eurasian watermilfoil, purple loosestrife and zebra mussels are more easily able to invade** and take over land and water where native plants have been removed for shoreline projects.
- **Piers and the boats docked at them shade out aquatic plants**, removing important habitat for baby game fish and for the minnows and other creatures that adult game fish, waterfowl and songbirds eat.

Thousands of small projects occur every year. Done improperly, they can change public lakes and rivers forever.

- 5,014 alterations were reviewed in 2003 *including*:
 - 1,606 seawalls, riprap and other shore erosion controls
 - 546 bulldozing shorelines and other grading
 - 406 dredging
 - 404 bridges and culverts
 - 76 ponds
 - 50 piers and boathouses