

Stewardship of Lakeshores

Saving loons (and eagles, osprey, and peregrines) is more than just saving a single species

- Indicator species
- Top of the food chain
- How do we make sure they continue to thrive?

People have different opinions on the “purpose” of lake shorelines:

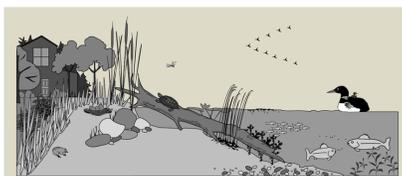
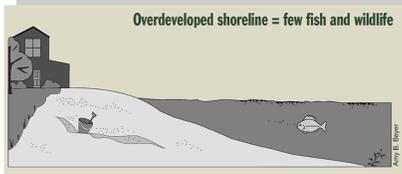
- For some, lakes are playgrounds (beaches, big lawns, boating, BBQs)
- For others, lakes and lakeshores are wildlife habitat.

Can we have both?

- Vermont lakeshores have drastically been altered over the past 60 years....this is a very short period of time.
- Lakeshore habitat is disappearing bit by bit.
- Can we use the Vermont “working landscape” model and apply it to lakeshores creating places for both people and wildlife to co-exist and thrive?

Stewardship is simple—do less

- Mow around the camp and a path to the lake.
- Stop mowing near the lake creating a “vegetative buffer” of 30, 50, or even 300 feet or more.
- Every few years cut some limbs and small trees to maintain a “partial” view of the lake.
- Re-plant native plants from the nearby woods....it’s free.
- Spend less time on yard maintenance, sit on your porch or dock more, go boating or fishing, enjoy the songbirds, dragonflies, and frogs. Have more privacy.



Long term Conservation of Loon Habitat

- Keeping land in the family
- Selling and sub-dividing

What are some options?

Protect:

- Existing nest sites.
- Land within ¼- ½ mile of nest sites.
- **Potential nest sites:** islands, marshes, uplands with spits of land jutting out or small hummocks.

How?

- Maintain buffers around loon nest sites.
- Avoid building the new camp for the “kids” near sensitive areas.
- Creative conservation easements on part of your land (e.g., 400 feet of shoreline and 100 feet back).

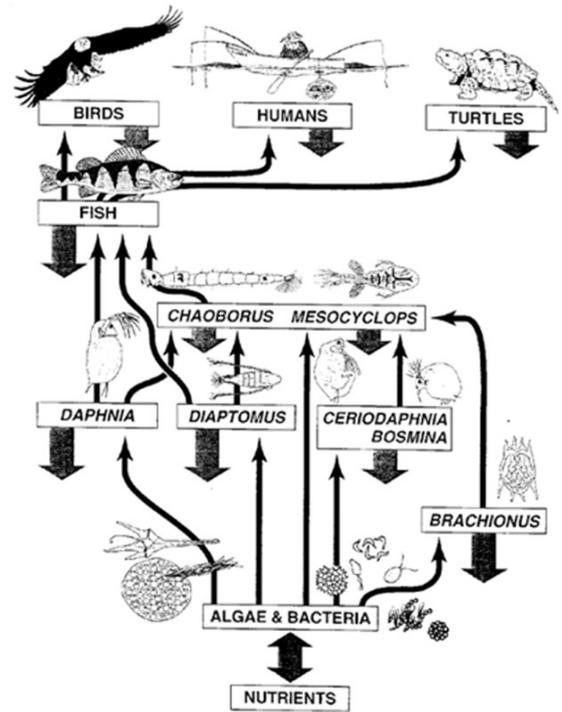
It’s going to take a change in mind-set of what is beautiful:

- A large, manicured lawn or
- A smaller lawn with a neatly kept path to the lake.

It’s going to take individuals willing to take a lead and allow natural plants to grow back.

Lakeshore owners need to be stewards of our lakes and ponds

By helping all the plants and animals that are the building blocks of a healthy lake, you are helping loons, other birds, frogs, fish, and insects.



MAJOR FOOD PATHWAYS IN LAKES

Shallow Water Zone

Who's there: **phytoplankton, zooplankton, aquatic insects, aquatic insect eggs and larvae, fish and fish eggs, otter, mink, frogs and frog eggs, turtles, food for loon chicks, food for big fish, food for osprey, eagles, kingfishers, herons**

What's important:

- Underwater and emergent plants
- Woody debris (hiding places, structure for egg masses, shade, food).
- Leaf litter (food and structure).
- Shade to keep water temperatures cool (for insect, frog, and fish eggs and many adult stages).
- Overhanging shrubs and trees.
- All these elements reduce erosion, reduce chance for algae blooms, and improve water quality.

What to do:

- **Leave fallen trees in the lake.**
- **Leave shoreline and emergent vegetation in place.**
- **Allow 30-300 foot wide areas to re-grow along shorelines.**

Open Water Zone

Who's there: **phytoplankton, zooplankton, small to big fish, loons**

What's important: **water quality and clarity**

What to do:

- **Reduce excess nutrients flowing into the lake.**
- **Reduce erosion from shorelines and wave action.**
- **Leave native plants in place.**
- **Allow 30-300 foot wide areas to re-grow along shore-**

Shore and Upland Riparian Zones

What's important:

- **Tall trees and shrubs provide:**
 - **habitat for birds**
 - **shade for in-water species**
 - **corridors for animals to move along the lakeshore and inland,**
 - **nesting trees**
- **Unmowed tall sedge/grass/shrub areas provide food and habitat for frogs, turtles, and birds**

What to do:

- **Leave shoreline vegetation in place.**
- **Allow mowed areas to re-grow.**
- **The wider the "buffer" zone, the better for wild-life.**
- **Maintain narrower path and beachfront area by the lake.**

For more information about the Vermont Loon Recovery Project, please contact:
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