



## No Wake to a Better Lake



Roads closed, basement remodels on the rise, and the mosquitoes insane: this has not felt like an ordinary summer for many of us. For one thing, it has rained so much that any Noah would have had to visit his local lumber yard. For another, boat motors have not been roaring so much. That's because many lakes in Carver County and around the metro area have

had "slow no wake" laws in effect since June. No wake means that watercraft must be operated at the slowest speed necessary to maintain steerage, but in no case greater than 5 m.p.h.

But the end of summer and the longing for boat rides, water skiing, and getting where we want to go quickly can make us restless. While they may seem inconvenient, slow no wake laws prevent property damage, ensure public safety, and protect lake and shoreline health.

No wake laws protect shorelines, those areas of land adjacent to the water body. Intact, natural shorelines hold soil in place where the land meets water, preventing erosion. They provide vital fish and wildlife habitat, filter pollutants from stormwater runoff, and rebuff the effects of high water levels, wave action, and ice.

Many of our shorelines are no longer natural. They have been riprapped, for example, or juxtaposed to lawns right to the water's edge. With few roots to hold soil in place, grassy shorelines are more likely to erode away with wave action and ice. Riprap can fail, also resulting in shoreline erosion. Erosion means the landowner loses property and the lake suffers increased pollutants, as from phosphorus and soil. According to the Wisconsin Department of

Natural Resources, lakes with altered shorelines result in five times more stormwater runoff, seven to nine times more phosphorus, and eighteen times more sediment. On top of that, altered shorelines displace wildlife, while natural shorelines are home to songbirds, waterfowl, turtles, fish and other animals that rely on them for shelter, food and nesting grounds. Loss of this habitat has resulted in measured declines in songbird diversity and frog populations. For more information on shorelines, visit <http://www.extension.umn.edu/environment/shoreland/>

Natural shorelines provide natural protection. They are particularly important when water levels are high and boat waves threaten to increase shoreline erosion. While we may be frustrated poking along, we must remember the important role lakes play in our lives and communities and do what we must to keep them healthy.

For the most recent status of these no wake laws, check with the Carver County Sheriff's office at 952-361-1231.

Learn more about natural shorelines and shoreline gardening in "[Shoreline Gardens: Re-imagining the Water's Edge.](#)"

