

Natural vegetation versus turf grass

Turf grass lawns should be avoided on waterfront properties as much as possible, as they are not as effective at controlling erosion and surface runoff when compared to natural lakeshore vegetation.

It is important that landowners understand the lawn care requirements of waterfront properties.

Landowners are urged to eliminate the use of cosmetic fertilizers, which are fertilizers used on residential properties to promote lawn and plant growth. Eliminating the use of all cosmetic fertilizers is ideal, however, if you must use fertilizer, organic fertilizers (manure, compost, etc.) are preferred. Leaving grass clippings on the lawn will supply nutrients in place of fertilizers.

Landowners should expect to tolerate vegetation diversity on their property and choose drought and disease-tolerant varieties when performing landscaping outside of the buffer zone.

Resources

Alberta Lake Management Society | www.alms.ca
Cows and Fish | www.cowsandfish.org
Living by Water | www.naturealberta.ca
Pigeon Lake Watershed Association | www.plwa.ca
Wizard Lake Watershed and Lake Stewardship Association | www.wizardlake.ca

Sustainable Agriculture

Leduc County and the County of Wetaskiwin No. 10's shared full-time Sustainable Agriculture program manager promotes the awareness and adoption of beneficial management practices in assisting landowners in becoming educated stewards of our land and water resources.

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SUSTAINABLE AGRICULTURE Managing your waterfront



County of Wetaskiwin Cosmetic Fertilizer By-law

In 2015, the County of Wetaskiwin Council approved By-Law Number 2015/36 to restrict the use of cosmetic fertilizer around six lakes within the County. The following is an excerpt from the by-law:

3. PROHIBITION

The use of Cosmetic Lawn Fertilizers, other than natural compost, is prohibited within one hundred (100) metres of the shoreline of Battle Lake, Buck Lake, Coal Lake, Pigeon Lake, Red Deer Lake or Wizard Lake in the County of Wetaskiwin No. 10.

4. EXCEPTIONS

This By-Law does not apply to the application of Cosmetic Lawn Fertilizer:

- (a) on lands used for the purpose of agriculture,
- (b) on lands used as a golf course or a golf driving range where that land use is in accordance with the zoning in the Land Use By-Law,
- (c) on lands used for horticultural production, such as greenhouse or market garden,
- (d) lands used as nursery stock for tree production or reforestation, or
- (e) lands used for turf grass or sod production.

For a full copy of the by-law please visit the County of Wetaskiwin website at: www.county.wetaskiwin.ab.ca

What is the riparian zone?

Lakeshores are great locations for natural vegetation growth. The land closest to the shore, where water and land meet and interact, is called the **riparian zone**.

A healthy riparian zone enhances and protects the health of the entire lake by providing the following ecosystem services: bank stability, water storage, biodiversity and water quality.

Managing your waterfront

Human disturbances of all kinds can affect a watershed and, ultimately, lake health. Sometimes, what people find aesthetically pleasing along the lakeshore can actually have a negative impact on lakeshore function.

In isolation, each disturbance might appear to be insignificant, however, disturbances can compound to have a significant negative impact on lake health.

To minimize impacts on the lake, landowners can do the following:

- Maintain their waste-water system.
- Use low-impact solutions for roads, trails and docks.
- Practice responsible boating and fishing.
- Maintain an adequate buffer zone while

preserving as much natural lakeshore vegetation as possible.

- Avoid the use of harmful cleaners, chemicals, fertilizers and pesticides on land near the shoreline.

Signs of an unhealthy shoreline

- Increased erosion and loss of property
- Increased levels of chemicals and/or nutrients in the water
- Increased water contamination
- Increased algae blooms
- Cloudy water
- Regular flooding

Effective buffer zones

A buffer zone is an area, measured from the shoreline, designated to preserve the lakeshore and prevent human activities from having a negative ecological impact on the watershed.

The buffer zone often includes the riparian zone and a portion of the upland zone.

The minimum suggested buffer zone is 30 metres (100 feet)*, with more sensitive or fragile areas requiring a greater buffer zone. If the minimum suggested buffer zone cannot be accommodated, landowners should preserve natural vegetation as much as possible.

The greater amount of natural lakeshore vegetation and ground cover in a buffer zone, the more effective the buffer zone will be at preventing erosion and other negative impacts. A landscape of natural vegetation is low-maintenance, with no additional watering, cutting or fertilizing required.

*On the Living Edge, Alberta Edition, 2002, Kipp and Callaway

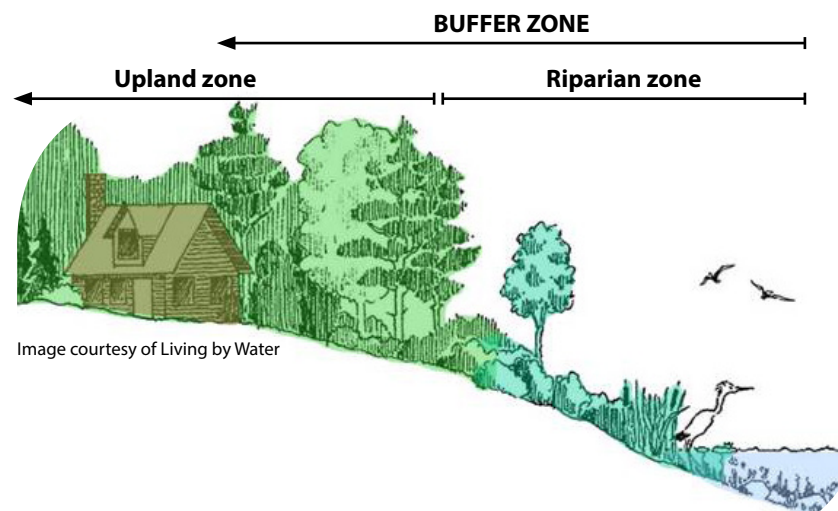


Image courtesy of Living by Water