



Respect Our Lakes

Understanding Shoreline
Lake Legislation

Do you have the appropriate approvals before
modifying your shoreline?
If you're not sure, call 310-3773 to be connected
with your local office to confirm.

Search 'Respect our Lakes' on Alberta.ca
Contact us at rol@gov.ab.ca
Call 310-3773

Alberta



Alberta

Shoreline Lake Legislation

We all love Alberta lakes and the shorelines that help keep them healthy. Provincial legislation is in place to help ensure that we can enjoy our lakes today and in the future. Shoreline property owners, as guardians of these special places, have an extra responsibility to understand and follow the legislation. At first glance, it may seem overwhelming – easy first steps are to know which land you own and what activities require an approval.

Who owns what?

Most lakeshore properties extend only as far as the “bank” and NOT to the water’s edge. The bank, also called the Ordinary High Water Mark, where upland vegetation ends and aquatic vegetation starts. The land from the bank to the water, or the exposed bed known as the shore, is owned by the province.

An environmental or municipal reserve may also separate your property from the lake and is administered by the local municipality. Contact your local municipality to learn if a reserve separates your property from the lake.



What are you doing?	What type of approval is required?		Why do you need it?
	Water Act	Public Lands Act	
Cutting or removing aquatic vegetation	✓	✓ *May be required	Vegetation removal and control contributes to loss of fish and bird habitat, loss of fish productivity, increased erosion potential, and an increase in nutrients that leads to more algal growth.
Shoreline modification	✓	✓	The use of rocks or boulders, to protect a shoreline from erosion is less desirable than grasses and shrubs, as it has fewer benefits; this method is only approved when erosion risk is very high.
Beach creation and renovation	✓ Beach construction is ok on private property only, and must be located above the bank of a lake.	✓	Sand can be a form of pollution as it can destroy fish habitat. Placement of sand on private land often encroaches onto public land and seldom lasts as it is easily eroded.
Docks and related mooring structures		✓ If placing a mooring structure (example: dock, boat lift) on public land for longer than 14 days.	Shoreline disturbance contributes to loss of fish and bird habitat, loss of fish productivity, and increased erosion potential
Septic/Sewage Systems	Yes – if you have a private sewage system it must be installed and maintained to the standards under the Alberta Safety Codes. Contact Public Safety Division of Alberta Municipal Affairs at 780-644-1010 and your municipality for local bylaws.		Adding nutrients to a lake, like nitrogen or phosphorus, can result in increasing blooms of blue-green algae.

Always consult before you construct.

How to apply for an approval:

Apply for a Water Act Approval through the Environmental Approvals System (EAS) Onestop. Search “Onestop” on www.alberta.ca.

Search “Lakeshore erosion potential calculator” to determine the erosion potential of a site. If shoreline modifications are for erosion control, use the flood control quick reference guide on Onestop.

*Learn more about specific activities and how to apply for a Public Lands Act approvals by searching “shorelands” on www.alberta.ca.

Apply for a TFA for your mooring structure (dock) by using the “Personal Use Recreational Docks” application.