

# THINKING OF A SANDY BEACH?

Short answers to frequently asked questions about altering shorelines

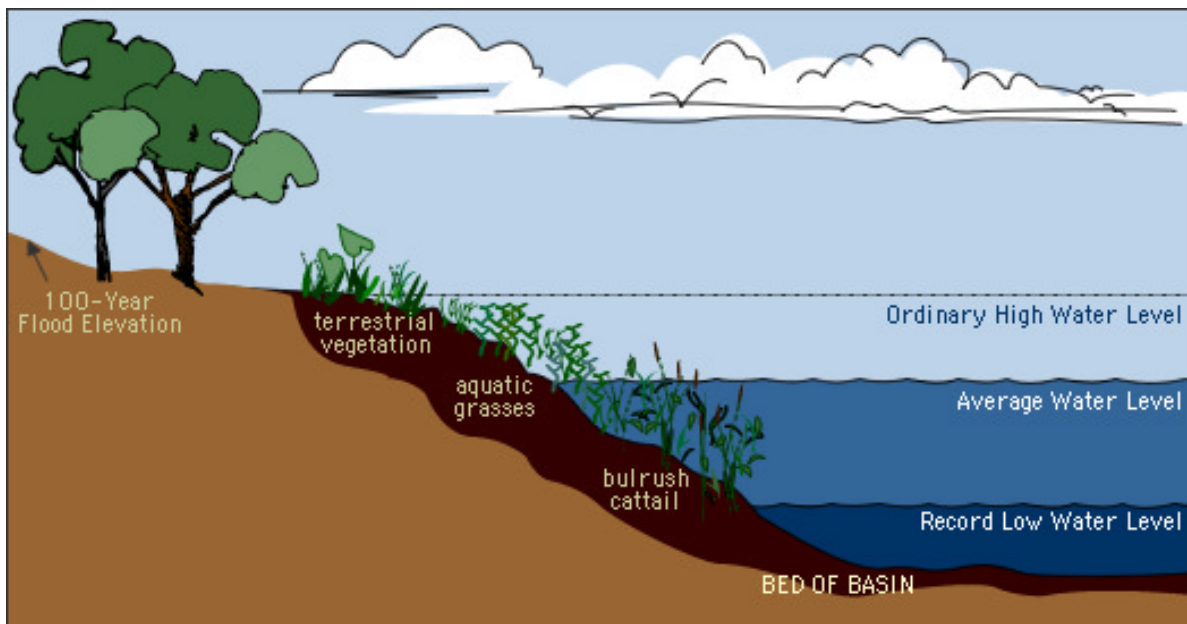


- Can I rework my shoreline to make it the way I want it?
- Can I create a sandy beach?
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- Can I terrace my bank along the water's edge or add a stairway or landing?
- Who can I contact if I have questions or a problem related to altering shorelines?
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## Can I rework my shoreline to make it the way I want it?

When thinking of an ideal shoreline, most of us envision a gentle slope to the lake with a sandy beach. However, many shorelines don't meet those ideal conditions, having steep slopes, wet areas, ice ridges, or other conditions that present management challenges. In the past, many shoreland property owners have attempted to "conquer" their shoreland property by building retaining walls, excavating steep slopes, filling wet areas, or importing sand. Today, we know that protecting natural shoreline features is critical to protecting water quality and maintaining a healthy lake ecosystem. Before trying to reconstruct your shoreline, consider what features of your current shoreline you can live

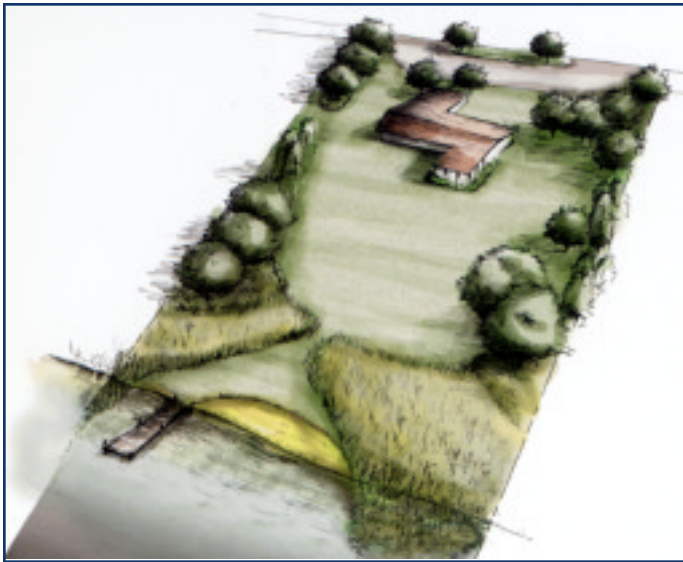
with. If you must make changes to improve access or for recreation, retain as much of the natural characteristics as possible to minimize your impact on water quality and habitat. Shoreland property owners should plan modifications carefully and consult with local zoning officials and/or the local Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (MDNR) office prior to beginning any work that involves the excavation or alteration of the shoreline. Alteration of the bottom of a lake or river below the Ordinary High Water level (OHW) is subject to the regulations of the MDNR. Alterations above the OHW are subject to regulations of your local government unit.



**Can I create a sandy beach?**

Not all Minnesota lakes have sandy shorelines and very few lakes have sandy shores around the entire perimeter. If a sandy beach is important to you, consider buying a property with an existing beach. Creating a sandy beach can be a difficult, expensive proposition, and the beach may not last more than a few years. If the lakeshore at your property is already sandy, creating a sandy beach is relatively straightforward. It is much more difficult to establish a sandy beach in areas with mucky bottoms. Regulations may allow you to add a beach sand blanket, though there are some limitations regarding what is allowed. Recognize that the sand you haul in may be expensive, may damage nearshore habitat, and can compact upland soils. In addition, the sand will probably need to be replaced regularly. If you add sand, use the largest available grain size to provide the greatest stability. Beach sand should not be added where it destroys fish or wildlife habitat, wild rice, or other protected vegetation. The natural gravel and silt found near shore provides habitat for spawning fish, burrowing insects, and tadpoles. Adding sand can smother and destroy that habitat. Rather than creating a sandy beach for swimming, consider anchoring a floating platform offshore. If you opt for a raft, boating safety concerns may make permits from your county sheriff's department necessary. Establishing a swimming beach in areas with lots of vegetation can result in swimmer's itch problems. For more information on control of swimmer's itch refer to the MDNR publication at this web address:

[www.dnr.state.mn.us/ecological\\_services/apm/swimmersitch.html](http://www.dnr.state.mn.us/ecological_services/apm/swimmersitch.html)



**Can I remove an ice ridge?**

Ice ridges commonly form from ice expanding and pushing against the shoreline each winter. The size of the ridge depends on bank slope, temperatures, lake levels and type of soil along the shore. Significant amounts of sand from the shore are lost when trapped in floating fragments of ice. The ice is carried along the shoreline and offshore into the deep water. This natural process results in the loss of more sand and soil along the shoreline than any other naturally occurring process. Although it may be tempting to remove ice ridges, they are actually helpful structures that slow runoff and stabilize

shorelines. A permit from MDNR Division of Waters is required to remove an ice ridge.

**Can I terrace my bank along the water's edge or add a stairway or landing?**

Evaluate the existing characteristics of your property before planning any construction or changes on the bank. Plan to preserve or re-establish existing vegetation. Use best management practices to reduce runoff to avoid erosion and protect water quality. Contact your local unit of government for regulations regarding shoreland, wild and scenic rivers, or critical area ordinances if you plan to do earth work along your shore. Most ordinances restrict the total surface area that may be covered with impermeable materials such as asphalt or concrete steps or landings. If the property is located within an incorporated area, contact the city planning and/or zoning department, and if the property is unincorporated, contact the county planning and/or zoning authority.

**Who can I contact if I have questions or a problem related to altering shorelines?**

Check your local telephone listing, the "Who to Contact" section of the Minnesota Shoreland Management Resource Guide Web site, [www.shorelandmanagement.org](http://www.shorelandmanagement.org), or the Web sites listed below for: Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (MDNR)

- [www.dnr.state.mn.us](http://www.dnr.state.mn.us)

Your County Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD)

- [www.mn.nrcs.usda.gov/partners/maswcd/maswcd.html](http://www.mn.nrcs.usda.gov/partners/maswcd/maswcd.html)

Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS)

- [www.mn.us.usda.gov](http://www.mn.us.usda.gov)

Your county, city, or township Planning and Zoning

**What are some additional resources related to altering shorelines?**

Managing Aquatic Plants in Minnesota Lakes. 1997. V.A. Krischik, R.M. Newman, and J.F. Kyhl. University of Minnesota Extension Service, St. Paul

Protecting Our Waters, Shoreland Best Management Practices Fact Sheet #5: Limiting Impact of Recreation on Water Quality. 1998. University of Minnesota Extension Service, St. Paul

Lakescaping for Wildlife and Water Quality. 1999. C.L. Henderson, C.J. Dindorf, and F. J. Rozumalski, Minnesota Department of Natural Resources

Life on the Edge: Owning Waterfront Property. 1998. M.D. Dresen and R. M. Korth. Wisconsin Lakes Partnership, Stevens Point Beach Sand Blankets. 1994. Minnesota Department of Natural Resources

Work That Can Be Done Without a Protected Waters Permit. 1994. Minnesota Department of Natural Resources, Division of Waters  
 Tips on Reducing the Risk of Swimmer's Itch. 2000. Minnesota Department of Natural Resources.