

Let's Make Healthy Lakes & Rivers Together!



The Healthy Lakes & Rivers initiative is a statewide effort providing outreach, technical assistance, and funding for five simple and inexpensive best practices that are appropriate for most lakeshore properties. Pitch your Healthy Lakes & Rivers feature story to Pamela Toshner (pamela.toshner@wi.gov) or Amy Kowalski (amy.kowalski@uwsp.edu).

Healthy Lakes & Rivers...Au Naturel

Some of life's greatest pleasures are free – in spirit, mind, and pomp (think skinny-dipping). Going *au naturel* applies to shorelands, too! Here are some ways you can give back to your lake or river - sans a cent or bead of sweat - with an open mind and naked heart.

- 1. Let trees be.** Trees have been growing around and falling into Wisconsin waters (and onto land) for thousands of years. Those fallen trees, which can span several human generations, protect shorelines and provide fish and wildlife habitat. Contrary to popular belief, there is no law requiring you to remove trees from the water. In fact, we'd prefer (and so would the fish, turtles, frogs, songbirds, eagles, minks, and more) you let them be.
- 2. Don't mow – let it grow.** 90% of wildlife rely on natural shorelines at some point in their lives. One of the simplest steps towards a healthier shoreland property is to refrain from mowing. Just be sure to remove any invasive species that may move in.
- 3. Seed yourself.** Fall is the perfect time to harvest seeds from your property or other places (with permission) and to sow them elsewhere on your land.
- 4. Skip the fertilizer.** Chances are, fertilizer is not necessary, regardless of your soil's nutrient content. Test your soil first to verify.
- 5. Get duff.** We can't all be buff, but we can promote a duff layer of decomposed leaves, needles, fine twigs, and other organic material. Leaves alone are compost for lawn and garden areas, as well as filters for runoff moving towards a waterbody. Suburban and urban areas may require leaf removal. If so, please don't sweep them into the street or storm drains.
- 6. Make a swerve.** Redirect gutters and downspouts away from the lake, river, and hard surfaces that drain to the waterbody. This is an easy way to prevent runoff pollution.
- 7. Plan now, save later.** 800 square feet of pavement, rooftop, or other hard surface generates nearly 500 gallons of water during a one-inch rain. Anytime you can refrain from adding a hard surface to your property, you're helping our lakes and rivers.
- 8. Seize nature.** Identify and protect existing natural areas, especially prior to construction. Many properties have vegetated areas where runoff can soak into the ground before it gets to your lake or river - and provide habitat, too!
- 9. Don't flip the switch.** Kitchen waste dumped down the drain via garbage disposal can contribute nutrients to and create maintenance problems for septic systems, which are not designed for that type of waste. Indoor (vermiculture) and outdoor composting are better alternatives.
- 10. Scoop the poop.** Pick up pet waste, especially in urban areas where it contributes substantial amounts of nutrient and bacteria to our waterbodies.

Take a chance – the *au naturel* experience may delight you! Commit a small area of your property or time on your schedule for testing it out. Then, kick back and enjoy the effort and money you've saved. ♦

