

FACT SHEET

ENHANCING HABITAT

Through the Docktalk program, FOCA encourages landowners to enhance wildlife habitat.

WHY? The benefits include:

Wildlife on the shoreline

A natural shoreline provides wildlife with food, shelter, protection, and nesting areas - on land or in water. Ninety percent of life in the lake lives in or passes through the shallow water below the shoreline. Shoreline alteration is the largest threat to habitat around lakes. Sand from beaches migrates and can cover spawning grounds. Retaining walls remove habitat. (See FOCA's Natural Shorelines fact sheet.)

Lakes full of fish

Fish have specific needs for their everyday habitat and spawning grounds. Water temperature, oxygen levels, protection, etc. play a role in each species ideal habitat, and ultimately their survival. Protecting and enhancing spawning areas and sheltering spots near shorelines supports fish populations.

Wildlife watching

Enhancing habitat will make your waterfront property wildlife-friendly. Grab binoculars and keep count of what visits and how often. Seventy per cent of land animals interact with shoreline environments at some point in their lifecycle.

Healthy shorelines

Healthy shoreline habitat, packed with native plants, shrubs, and trees, prevents erosion, assists in flood control, and filters pollution. Scattered debris along the water's edge, such as fallen logs, not only provides habitat but also helps protect against erosion and ice damage. Healthy habitats are better equipped to keep invasive species out.

Help threatened species

Many animals and plants are threatened or of special concern because they do not have the habitat they need to survive. Examples include the common loon, spotted turtle, and lakeside daisy. Enhancing habitat can provide crucial support to these species. Find out what wildlife are in danger in your locale and could use your help.

Wetland water control

Wetlands are among the most diverse ecosystems in the world. Wetlands act as sponges, filters, and water flow control. They soak up runoff, absorb pollutants, block sediment, and release the water at more moderate speeds.

Wildlife means all wild mammals, birds, reptiles, amphibians, fishes, invertebrates, plants, fungi, algae, bacteria, and other wild organisms.

Find out how you can enhance wildlife habitat...

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HOW?

FOCA encourages landowners to take the following steps to enhance wildlife habitat in and around lakes:

Maintain a natural shoreline

Leave undeveloped shores in their natural state. Aim for an undisturbed strip of land extending at least 10 metres back from shore. Recreate natural shorelines on previously developed sites. (See FOCA's Natural Shorelines fact sheet.) If there are wetlands (marshes) on your property, leave them as is.

Let sleeping logs lie

Leave fallen logs, debris, and vegetation on land and along the shoreline to provide erosion control and habitat for amphibians, reptiles, birds, mammals, and beneficial insects.

Plan for wildlife

Plant species that benefit specific wildlife. Build bird nesting boxes or platforms. Dead trees - that don't pose a safety hazard - can be left standing to provide homes for insects, birds, and mammals.

Prune, don't chop

Prune branches blocking your scenic view instead of removing trees and shrubs.

Handle oil and gas away from water

It doesn't take much oil or gas in the water to affect wildlife and habitat in the lake and along the shoreline.

Clean up polluted areas

Concerned cottagers can work together to clean up polluted areas of lakes and shorelines. Removing garbage can clean up fish habitat, nesting areas, and remove sources of continuing contamination. Contact your local cottage association.

Check regulations

Shoreline modifications may be subject to a number of regulations. Check the Department of Fisheries and Oceans' Operational Statements to find out if regulations apply to your project, http://www.dfo-mpo.gc.ca/oceans-habitat/habitat/water-eau/index_e.asp

Keep a paper trail of any plans, approvals, etc.

Resources online:

www.foca.on.ca

www.ducks.ca

www.on.ec.gc.ca/wildlife/sar/designation-e.html

<http://www.dfo-mpo.gc.ca/oceans-habitat/>

Your local contact: