

WATERFRONT WISDOM — HEALTHY HABIT #2: PREVENT SOIL EROSION AND SEDIMENTATION

As a waterfront homeowner, you have a unique opportunity to contribute to the health of your local waterway. Many activities we conduct near the waterfront, in our lawns and gardens and around our home, impact water quality. This is even more critical to riparian homeowners because runoff doesn't have far to travel before reaching the water. We can prevent water pollution by being aware that our actions DO impact water quality. We can all make a difference by practicing Healthy Habits for Clean Water.

CHALLENGE: Murky water, reduced oxygen levels for aquatic life, loss of aquatic habitat, sedimentation and loss of valuable waterfront property.

CAUSE: Eroded soils are by volume the greatest pollutant of waterways in the United States. Most sediment comes from overland erosion, but shoreline and streambank erosion also contribute to the problem. Erosion is also a major pathway for sediment filled with nutrients and pesticides to runoff into waterways.

SOLUTION: CONTROL UPLAND, SHORELINE AND STREAMBANK EROSION THROUGH PREVENTATIVE MEASURES.

WHAT YOU CAN DO

GO NATURAL! Utilize natural materials, such as wildflowers, grasses and shrubs, to stabilize shorelines and streambanks. Engineered structures, such as seawalls, greatly reduce or eliminate riparian habitat and can cause erosion problems for neighboring properties that do not have similar structures. These types of structures are recommended only in the case of extremely erosion-prone areas with excessive wave action and swift moving water.

- If you have an existing seawall, try supplementing the area in front of the structure with native aquatic vegetation to help restore lost aquatic habitat.
- Look into a method of stabilization called bioengineering. It accomplishes stabilization of the shoreline by using living plant materials. It also improves wildlife and aquatic habitat.

LESS IS MORE: Minimize disturbance to ground cover when doing any type of land clearing work. Avoid mass-grading large areas which will allow more disturbed soil to be exposed and vulnerable to erosion from runoff after it rains or when snow melts. At the waterfront, leave as many aquatic plants in place as possible—they will hold bottom sediments in place and protect the shoreline from the erosive forces of wind and ice action.

KEEP IT LEGAL: Obtain required permits and install necessary soil erosion controls. Any earth-changing activity that will impact more than one acre of land, or is within 500 feet of a lake, stream or wetland requires a soil erosion control permit.

COVER YOUR BALD SPOTS: Vegetate bare soil as quickly as possible with an appropriate vegetative cover, such as sod or seed. Be sure to mulch the area with straw or other appropriate cover to prevent erosion until the seeds germinate.



Before



After

DON'T BE STUMPED: Incorporate large woody debris, such as stumps, logs and tree trunks, as a management option for streambanks and shorelines. Woody debris provides essential aquatic habitat and stabilizes shorelines and streambanks from erosion.

