



# WISCONSIN ASSOCIATION OF LAKES, INC.

*is a nonprofit group of citizens,  
organizations, and businesses working for a clean, safe, healthy lakes for everyone.*

One Point Place, Suite 101 Madison, WI 53719-2809  
800/542-5253(WI) • 608/662-0923 • FAX 608/833-7179  
e-mail: wal@wisconsinlakes.org / website: www.wisconsinlakes.org

## Shoreland zoning rules

### *A good investment for property owners and the public*

**Contact:** Peter T. Murray, Executive Director

**Phone:** (608) 662-0923

The interests of thousands of lakefront property owners, anglers, boaters, tourists, and the businesses that depend on them are the same: to have clean, safe, healthy lakes for everyone. Protecting water quality, fish and wildlife habitat, and natural scenic beauty enhances public rights and private property values.

### **Shoreland zoning rules protect property values**

A healthy lake with good water quality translates into higher property values. Shoreland zoning rules protect water quality by protecting natural shorelines. Natural shorelines prevent polluted runoff from entering lakes, help control flooding, preserve privacy and natural scenic beauty, and provide habitat for fish and wildlife.

Who wants to swim in a lake choked with algae and what angler will travel to a lake without fish? If everyone has cleared off shoreland vegetation to make way for lawns, if the view on the lake is of a neighbor's window shades, is this lake worth the same as a lake with trees on the shore, good fishing, and clean water? No. Shoreland zoning rules protect everyone's enjoyment of the water.

### **Shoreland zoning rules preserve local control**

Shoreland zoning rules are statewide minimum standards that give our lakes basic protection. These rules provide counties with the choice to increase standards if necessary. Over twenty Wisconsin counties have already chosen to better protect their unique lakes by passing shoreland zoning rules that are stronger than the statewide minimums. Vilas County, for example, has placed stronger local shoreland protection ordinances on all lakes. These strong standards have boosted some property values up to 25%. The proposed state shoreland zoning rules will not weaken these local initiatives. Local control is an important part of protecting our lakes, and the proposed revisions aim to make administration and enforcement of rules much easier for counties.

### **Shoreland zoning rules provide certainty and flexibility**

Clearly worded rules on how far from the water a building should be, minimum lot sizes, limits on clearing shoreland plants, and polluted runoff controls provide counties and homeowners with certainty on what is permitted.

The proposed rules recognize that lakefront properties and shorelands are diverse, and flexibility within the rules is needed to maintain lake quality and property values. For example, the

treatment of non-conforming structures under the proposed rules will make it easier for propertyowners to maintain their property while still protecting their lake. Property owners would have the flexibility to repair, rebuild, or expand some non-conforming structures, depending on the situation.

### **Why are shoreland zoning rules important?**

Some would argue against having any restrictions. “If we have no rules, or very limited rules as some are requesting, your private property rights will be compromised by those who care only for themselves,” says WAL Executive Director Peter Murray.

The draft now offered for public review reflects nearly three years of work by the advisory committee, and broad public participation. These rules reflect the considerable effort made to balance the rights of the public and property owners who enjoy Wisconsin’s lakes with natural resource protection.

“How do we measure the value of a sunset over the lake, or of a fish jumping in front of our boat? How can we, the public, ensure that our waters will continue to be pure and clear and available for our children and grandchildren?” asks WAL board member Sam Lewis. Supporting shoreland zoning that protects the value of water as well as private property is a good solution.