

Just Because It's Legal Doesn't Mean It's Good

Recent state actions have eliminated many elements of local shoreland zoning ordinances designed to protect our lakes and rivers. Rules and guidelines that local officials had deemed critical to protect lakes and streams were declared null and void by the State of Wisconsin.

Now some activities that can seriously harm our waters are legal. The new rules were advanced overnight by the Joint Finance Committee, approved by the State Legislature and signed into law by the Governor. But regardless what is and is not legal, we can still do what is right – for our water, our neighbors, and our properties. Consider:

- **Clearing and mowing your lake property all the way to the water's edge may be legal, but is it good for your lake?**
- **Renting your lake home to groups for one-week stays may be legal, but is that considerate of your neighbors?**
- **Driving your boat at 60 mph may be legal, but is it safe and prudent?**
- **Removing a fallen dead tree on your shore is permissible, but will doing so take away beneficial fish habitat?**
- **Dredging in the lake in front of your property may become legal, but how will it affect the lake ecosystem and fishery?**
- **Dividing your large waterfront property into several lots may be allowed, but will more homes and more runoff impair the health of your lake?**

Though we are free to do whatever is legal, that may not be good for the water. In fact, pushing up to the legal limits may help ruin the quality and the value of the place you love. As you make plans for your property, don't think of what you can legally do. Think of doing what is right for the lake.

"A thing is right when it tends to preserve the integrity, stability and beauty of the biotic community. It is wrong when it tends otherwise."

—Aldo Leopold

One in a series of articles sponsored by the Oneida County Lakes and Rivers Association (www.oclra.org). For more information, contact Bob Martini at 715-282-5896 or email to webmaster@oclra.org. OCLRA encourages the use and distribution of this material by lake associations, their members, and other parties concerned about water quality.

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Lakes and Rivers Association