



## YOUR SHORE: A NATURAL WONDER

For many cottagers and other waterfront residents, the quiet spot by the lake is a little bit of paradise where we can relax, play, and enjoy being closer to nature. But it's a special place for another reason too. The zone where the water meets the land is the richest natural environment most of

us will ever come into contact with, and almost certainly the most complex piece of the earth we'll have the opportunity to live near and share. Equally important, the waterfront is crucial to your lake's health, acting as lungs, doormat, cafeteria, and daycare for the lake, as well as a living retaining wall for the shore.

When a natural shoreline is altered, often by well-intentioned projects meant to improve waterfront living, that intricate balance between the creatures, plants, and earth is toppled. Call it the "domino effect." A typical scenario goes like this: After smashing the piggy bank to pay for a cottage lot, the new owners want to enjoy that priceless view of the water (and who wouldn't?). So they gather the extended family for a weekend logging bee and clear out the thicket of plants, shrubs, and trees lining the shore. But once the trees and shrubs are gone, the soil their roots held in place begins to erode. Now the cottager family spends uneasy weekends watching their frontage become lakefill. Worried about the erosion of their property and investment, they forego renovations to their city home and use the cash to build a break-wall. In a few years, the wall, undermined by the constant pounding of the waves, begins to list or crack. This time,

the owners dip into the kids' university fund to underwrite a new series of repairs. What began as a bid to see the lake turns into a grudge match between the cottagers and the waterfront – and both sides are taking a beating.

Why not declare a truce and weave your cottage needs into the natural shore? This booklet will show you how to protect and nurture the qualities that make it such a special location. Because much of our waterfront is no longer in a natural state, however, it also offers cottagers and other landowners constructive solutions for restoring an altered shoreline to its former health and beauty. *The Shore Primer* is the second in a series of booklets on waterfront stewardship published by Cottage Life in association with Fisheries and Oceans Canada. It, in combination with *The Dock Primer* (see p. 22), can help you become a better caretaker of your own little piece of paradise.

