



Where does the rain go and why should you care?

As a shorefront property owner, you can spend many happy hours gazing out at “your” lake, pond, river or stream. But if you want to guard against the greatest danger to your investment and your quality of life, you need to think seriously about water coming from an entirely different direction - above.

Start by asking yourself a very important question: Where does the rain go?

The Number 1 source of pollution to surface water in Maine is soil erosion, according to the Maine Department of Environmental Protection. Each year rainstorms and snowmelt wash tons of dirt off the Maine land. Watching your valuable property being carried away is bad enough, but there’s worse news. Eroded soil particles carry pollutants such as oil, fertilizers, pesticides, and phosphorous into our lakes.

So the next time it rains, put on a raincoat or pick up an umbrella and take a look. You’ll see water pouring off your roof, rolling off your driveway and deck, and running down your lawn. But it doesn’t stop there, of course, and it isn’t just the rainwater that’s running downhill, it’s everything water can carry with it.

As a property owner and lake lover, your goal is to head off erosion or at least slow it down, so that one part of your property – soil and sediments – won’t damage a major part of your investment – the water quality.

Murky water also is tough on fish and wildlife. It makes it hard for fish to see and feed properly. Sediments can interfere with reproduction since many fish and aquatic insects





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Photo by Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources

lay their eggs in gravel beds. They can also fill in streams, making them shallower and warmer, which makes survival difficult for coldwater fish, such as trout and salmon.

“The shoreland zone is very important habitat for many of Maine’s animals,” says Bridie McGreavy, Professor of Environmental Communication at the University of Maine “The majority of Maine mammals use the shoreland zone for a part of their habitat, whether it’s access to the water or food or nesting.”

And then there’s the economic impact of erosion. Nothing destroys the value of shorefront property faster than a decline in water quality. In a University of Maine study, 98 percent of shorefront home buyers rated water clarity as one of the primary reasons they bought their home. That’s ahead of quality of swimming (87 percent) and even scenic beauty (82 percent). In fact, more than 51% of shorefront residents had specifically considered water clarity before buying property.

So the damage caused by erosion can ultimately result in higher building costs, lower shorefront property values, higher taxes and loss of business and jobs. But you don’t need studies to tell you how important clean, clear water is. All you need to know is that you don’t want to dive into murky water. You don’t want to fish in it or boat on it. And a scenic view isn’t very scenic if the water is covered with brown or green scum.

So the goal of this guide is to help homeowners help themselves. You can make a difference in water quality and protect your property at the same time. In fact, you can actually make your property more beautiful, but easier to maintain. And it’s far simpler than you might think.