

- where such structures may adversely block public access along the bed or shore of the lake

**Users are advised to contact their local municipal planning office, and provincial or federal regulatory offices to determine if there are any areas on a lake subject to restriction. Structures placed in any of the above areas may require approval or may be removed.**

## When Written Authority is Required

Written authority is required to divert water, or prior to developing the following structures or modifications on lake beds, shores and floodplains:

- any project (temporary or permanent) that impacts the aquatic environment or involves the disturbance of, modification, placement or removal of material on the lake's bed, shore or floodplain—this includes the removal of pressure ridges caused by ice thrusts and the placement of sand for beaches
- any commercial development (temporary or permanent)
- any cutting or removal of aquatic vegetation
- any erosion protection, retaining walls, groynes, breakwaters and causeways
- any permanent piers, boat launches, boathouses, and other associated improvements
- any permanent waterline installations into or beneath the lake
- any other permanent structures on the bed, shore or floodplain of the lake

Anyone wishing to carry out any developments on public lakeshores must have legal access to that proposed lakeshore development before authorization can be issued.

Written authority for lakeshore projects must be obtained before construction begins.

**Contractors must have a copy of the written authorization at the work site.**

Any unapproved activity that alters the bank, bed or shore of a lake, or the management of the water will

be considered to be an unauthorized use of a public resource. Such unauthorized uses will be investigated, and may result in penalties, or restoration and/or mitigation being required.

## How to Obtain Written Authority

Complete an "Application for Shoreline/Water Body Modification" form for your proposed lakeshore project. The application form is available from your nearest ASRD or AENV office. It is also available online at [www.srd.gov.ab.ca](http://www.srd.gov.ab.ca) and [www.environment.alberta.ca](http://www.environment.alberta.ca).

The following information must be submitted with your application:

- a legal description of the land
- a Location Plan\*, and a cross-sectional sketch\* which show the characteristics of the site and the proposed works in relation to the property (a plan prepared by an Alberta Land Surveyor may be required in some cases.)
- a letter explaining your proposal, why it is needed, and when it is to be built
- A photograph showing the existing shoreline.

\*See the application form for more details and an example.

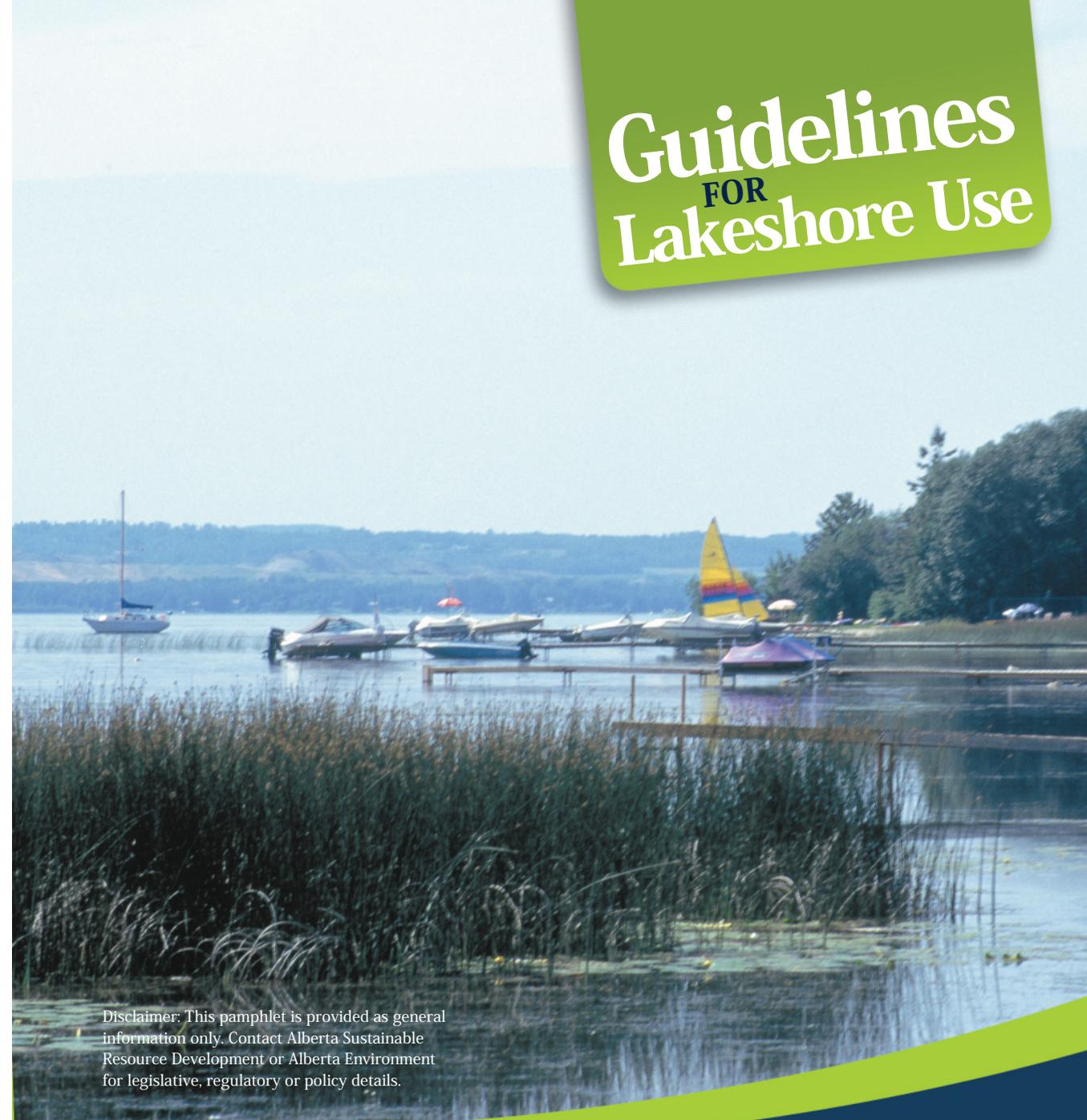
Proposals are reviewed for potential impacts to the lake's bed and shore, floodplain, water quality, fish and wildlife habitat, or public access. Applicants are advised **in writing** when a project is approved.

Modifications to or developments on Environmental or Municipal Reserves may also require approval from the municipality that is responsible for the land.

To obtain information regarding individual land titles, property boundaries or subdivision plans, contact any private registry in Alberta or your local municipal government office.

Be advised that federal approvals from the Department of Fisheries and Oceans (DFO) may also be required where a project may affect fish habitat or the navigability of a water body.

# Guidelines FOR Lakeshore Use



Disclaimer: This pamphlet is provided as general information only. Contact Alberta Sustainable Resource Development or Alberta Environment for legislative, regulatory or policy details.

## Alberta's Lakes and their Shores – A Fragile and Valuable Resource

In Alberta, only 2.5 per cent of the landscape is covered by water. As pressure to develop lakes for recreational cottages and other uses increases, our fragile and limited lakeshore resources are impacted. Careful management is, therefore, required to protect lakes and their shores against permanent disturbance or loss.



Lakeshore property owners play an important role in ensuring that lakes and shores remain undamaged and that access along publicly owned shores is maintained.

## Water, Lake Beds and their Shores are a Public Resource

The beds and shores of most lakes are owned by the province of Alberta and are a resource for all Albertans to enjoy. Any activity that may disturb the bed and shore of a lake, impact the aquatic environment, or use and divert water requires an approval from one or more regulatory agencies.

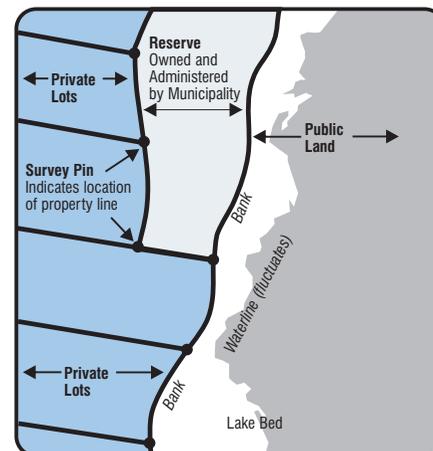
## Determining what is Private Land, Public Land and Reserve Land

The shore of a lake is the part of the lake bed that is exposed when water levels are low.



The bank of the lake is the legal line that separates private land from the bed and shore of the lake. In most cases, it's a distinct line formed by the normal, long-continued action or presence of surface water along the land at the edge of the lake. The location of the bank is not affected by occasional periods of drought or flooding. The land from the bank towards the water is considered public land.

Properties can be separated from the lake by a municipally owned and administrated reserve. These reserves (municipal or environmental) ensure lakeshore areas remain protected, and that public access to them is maintained.



The reserves are generally located between the lakeward edge of the lot and the bank of the lake.

Most lake properties do not extend to the water's edge. Certificates of the title used with survey plans for lake subdivisions will show whether the lakeward boundary of the owner's property is the bank or a municipal reserve. It's important to remember that the subdivision survey plan shows the location of the property boundary, not the water's edge (see diagram). To determine the location of a bank or boundary, contact an Alberta Land Surveyor.

## Damaging Lakeshore Practices and Unauthorized Uses

Natural disturbances to lake shores, such as pressure ridges caused by ice thrusting, do occur. Additional problems may arise through human alteration of the bed and shore and adjacent lands.

Removing aquatic vegetation from the lake and its shores can significantly impact the lake environment by adversely affecting fish and wildlife habitat and increasing the potential for erosion and loss of uplands. Rooted aquatic plants growing in the shallow waters of lakes are often seen as nuisance weeds, but they are important to the health of lakes. These plants stabilize the bed and shore by providing a physical barrier to wave action and by reducing soil movement and erosion. They are also important areas for fish, waterfowl and wildlife. Aquatic plants also use nutrients in lakes that would otherwise contribute to unwanted algae growth.



Avoid removing tree cover or any other vegetation between the developed area and the lake. Natural, undisturbed wooded "buffer strips" help protect the lake's water quality by trapping pollutants and preventing erosion. Buffer strips also provide habitat for birds and other wildlife, and greater privacy for lakeshore owners.

Creating beaches by dumping sand or other material on the bed and shore requires authorization as it alters the natural characteristics of the lake and can cause harmful effects to water quality and fish habitat. Imported material can be a source of pollution that introduces nutrients into the lake, enhancing algae growth and turning the lake green. When algae decays it uses oxygen in the water and can contribute to late summer or winter fish kills.

## Consult Before You Construct

Check with your local Alberta Sustainable Resource Development (ASRD) or Alberta Environment (AENV) office before undertaking any bed and shore modifications. Written authority may be required and staff at these offices can also assist you with the most appropriate manner or location to develop a lakeshore project. Their assistance can minimize the potential for harmful effects to the water body and will help protect sensitive fish and wildlife habitat.

## What You Can Do on the Bed and Shore Without an Approval

A temporary, seasonal pier, dock or boat lift (that is removed completely from the lake at the end of summer) may be constructed or placed on the bed and shore of a lake without obtaining an approval, except in the following circumstances:

- where an environmentally sensitive area or a management concern is identified by the provincial or federal government, and restrictions have been established
- where a local municipal development plan, a lake management plan, or a water management plan limits or restricts such uses
- where the proposed structure's design may interfere with the normal flow of water or is likely to increase the probability of bank or shoreline erosion