

Beach building – the nitty gritty on sand dumping

Only a small percentage of waterfront properties in Canada have a natural beach. Is your's one of them? On Lake Windermere, the answer may be no.

While you might think that creating a little beach on your waterfront property does no harm, nothing could be further from the truth. Not only are you setting yourself up for potential failure, but you can also negatively impact the quality of water in the lake and destroy important fish habitat in the process.

Shoreline areas provide habitat for a variety of aquatic organisms, including fish. Many fish species lay their eggs, feed and seek protection from predators adjacent to the shoreline. Changes to this important area can threaten their survival.

If you build a beach without the necessary approvals and permits, you will find yourself in violation of the federal *Fisheries Act* and possibly faced with substantial fines or even imprisonment.

Creating a sand beach where one does not naturally exist is a losing battle. Wind, currents, ice and other erosive forces will work to remove the sand over time. In order to keep your beach, you will need to add more sand to it every year. Not only does this represent an ongoing financial cost, but also an environmental cost as the sand erodes away and clouds and covers fish spawning beds and damages drinking-water quality.

Wasa Lake, north of Cranbrook, has seen its share of shoreline damage. Many waterfront residents assume that they have the right to dump sand along their shoreline and that sand dumping causes no harm to the lake. Susanne Ashmore of the Wasa Lake Land Improvement Society says, "Lakes are not swimming pools. They are living ecosystems. Alter one aspect, and if enough people do it, the results are predictable."

What can you do if you want to relax on the beach at your waterfront home? Consider creating a dryland beach well above the high water mark and landscape it with logs, rocks and native plants to keep it from washing away. Use pea gravel in place of sand on your dryland beach and you will minimize any impact on water quality and fish habitat if some gravel finds its way into the water.

Follow nature's cue and leave the sand where it belongs.

For more information please contact the Lake Windermere Project at 341-6898, or visit the project office located in the old District of Invermere office beside the Invermere Community Centre. The Lake Windermere Project is a long-term

comprehensive stewardship program dedicated to safeguarding the health of our lake. The Lake Windermere Project is made possible by generous support from Wildsight, Environment Canada, Columbia Basin Trust and the Real Estate Foundation of B.C. Information provided by the Muskoka Watershed Council.