**Score your shore: A tool to measure the health of your lakeshore property**

The water’s edge is alive. Herons, ducks and other birds nest near the shore to fish, skim for insects, and hunt for frogs and crayfish. Turtles sun themselves on fallen logs during the summer and bury themselves in mud along the bank during the winter. Fish spawn and lay their eggs in the shadows of fallen logs. By the water’s edge, children laugh and chase frogs while anglers in nearby boats wait patiently for a bite.

The Minnesota DNR offers several resources to lakeshore property owners to help maintain or restore the health of their shorelines. One - the *Score Your Shore* tool – was designed to help people assess the condition of their properties without the help of an expert. Landowners score high points for having trees, shrubs and groundcover on the upland and shoreline portions of their properties; keeping native aquatic plants such as bulrush, pondweeds, and water lily; and leaving at least some downed tree limbs or branches in the water to provide habitat and protection from wave-based erosion.

The goal of *Score Your Shore* is to identify opportunities for improvement – not shame people for having altered shorelines. Says Tom Furey, a cabin-owner on Bone Lake in Scandia, “I went through the manual and identified 10-15 things to do my first year after buying the property. I realized I should get my well water checked to make sure it’s safe to drink and I should probably check my soil too before I begin any landscaping projects.” He soon discovered a wealth of local assistance available through his local watershed district and Soil and Water Conservation District, including free site visits, planting plans, and grants to purchase native plants.

Maintaining and restoring lakeshore habitat isn’t just good for wildlife, it also helps to protect valuable real estate from literally washing away. Trees and deep-rooted native plants hold soil in place and help rainwater to soak into the ground. Deep and widespread root systems spread out underground, creating a mesh net that holds the soil in place, limiting lakeshore erosion from waves and protecting streambanks and riverbanks from slumping. Additionally, shoreline vegetation filters out some of the nutrients and pollution that flow overland from nearby farms and neighborhoods.

In addition to protecting against erosion, native plants like milkweed, asters and black-eyed susans add visual interest and provide food for birds and pollinators. In wooded areas, native shrubs help to keep buckthorn from invading. Submerged and emergent aquatic plants shelter and feed fish, turtles and shore birds and also provide a buffer against wave action and winter ice-heaves.

To download a copy of the *Score Your Shore* manual and find other shoreline management resources, go to [www.dnr.state.mn.us/scoreyourshore](http://www.dnr.state.mn.us/scoreyourshore).

If you would learn about local programs for shoreline landowners, [insert local contact information here.]

**Score Your Shore:
a citizen shoreline description survey**

***Score Your Shore*** is a tool to assess habitat conditions of developed lake lots. The protocol is designed for use by lakeshore property owners to self-assess habitat and stewardship on their land and adjacent aquatic areas. This tool may also be used by organizations, such as lake associations, to assess multiple sites on a lake. Score Your Shore provides an objective and systematic method to assess the type, quantity and quality of the existing shoreland habitat.

The ***Score Your Shore*** tool will enable you to:

* Assess the amount of habitat at developed lake sites
* Generate awareness of what makes a high-quality functioning shoreline buffer
* Provide a system to recognize landowners with functioning shoreline buffers