

Respect Our Lakes

Keeping Alberta's
Lakes Healthy

For More Information

For more information about lake health, lake stewardship or the authorization process:

Environment and Parks

aep.alberta.ca (search 'Respect our Lakes')
ESRD.Info-Centre@gov.ab.ca

Or call: 310-3773

For environmental complaints/emergencies
call the 24-hour environmental hotline:

1-800-222-6514

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Keeping Alberta's Lakes Healthy

Lakes are one of the most treasured aspects of the Alberta landscape. They have become an integral part of many lives, whether you are a long-time lake resident or someone who visits lakes occasionally for boating, fishing or wildlife watching. Unfortunately, many lakes and watersheds in Alberta have seen extensive land clearing and development, resulting in large amounts of nutrients entering lakes and settling in lake sediments. Years of reduced rainfall coupled with excess nutrients has resulted in lakes that have many water quality issues, such as extensive blue-green algal (cyanobacterial) blooms.

The Respect Our Lakes (ROL) program was developed within the Government of Alberta and aims to support and engage Albertans in lake stewardship. The ROL program provides the tools and resources to help lake users understand, value, and actively manage lakes through the application of relevant legislation and science. ROL resources are available on-line and also on request to individuals and communities engaged in lake stewardship.

Understanding Lake Science

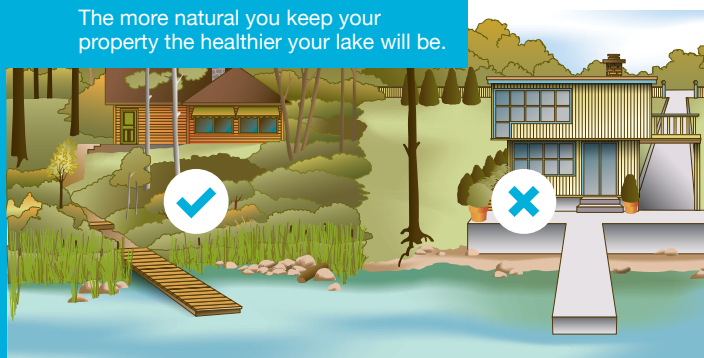
Lake monitoring in Alberta has shown that most lakes in Central Alberta tend to be shallow, turbid, warm, alkaline, and capable of supporting a variety of aquatic plants and animals. These lakes also tend to be classified as “productive”, meaning they have naturally high levels of nutrients, namely nitrogen and phosphorus. While productive lakes can be good for things like fish productivity, very high levels of nutrients can negatively impact aquatic health and can cause harmful blue-green algal (cyanobacterial) blooms that affect fish, wildlife and people.

Lake levels as a measure of water quantity are also routinely measured by scientists who monitor lakes in Alberta. Findings indicate that water levels have historically varied considerably due to fluctuations in precipitation and evaporation. While lakes in Central Alberta are generally experiencing stable or decreasing water levels, there has been no overall trend in terms of decreasing water quantity since long-term monitoring programs started in the early 1980s.

Understanding Lake Legislation

Federal and Provincial legislation is in place to manage and conserve our natural resources including lakes. By following these rules and guidelines, we not only ensure that we can all enjoy our lakes today, but that future generations can also benefit from all they have to offer. It is everyone's responsibility to be aware of the regulations. Before starting any project that may alter the shoreline of a water body, you must have written authorization from all applicable regulators and a copy must be present at the work site.

The more natural you keep your property the healthier your lake will be.



Lake Stewardship and You

Maintaining the health of Alberta's lakes is everyone's responsibility. Actions of individual lakeshore residents, decision makers and land users around the lake add up to make a huge difference! Here's some examples of what you can do:

- Leave your shoreline and aquatic vegetation in its natural condition — in fact it is illegal to do any shoreline modifications or aquatic vegetation removal without written authorization from Environment and Parks
- Plant native plants and shrubs where shorelines have been cleared
- Use no fertilizers or only organic, slow-release fertilizers placed well away from the shoreline
- Consider sharing docks, piers and boat lanes within your community to minimize shoreline disturbance
- Keep “wheels out of water” — in fact regulations prohibit people from using “Off Highway Vehicles” on the beds and shores of a permanent and naturally occurring body of water
- Refuel your boat using spill control devices or fill tanks well away from water
- Have your septic system inspected regularly and empty septic tanks as recommended
- Watch for aquatic invasive species and report or remove as appropriate
- Get involved with your local lake stewardship group to help promote healthy lake living