

PRESERVING LAND, ENHANCING FISHING

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There are many excellent reasons to preserve land; maintaining habitat for wildlife, protecting water quality, providing natural areas for carbon dioxide absorption to help reduce global warming and protecting shoreland to enhance fish populations.

One of the biggest threats to healthy fish populations is shoreland development and destruction of vegetation. Sunfish, crappies, largemouth and smallmouth bass, northern pike and muskies, all depend on good shoreland habitat for spawning new generations of fish. The threat to this good habitat is the clearing of shoreland for docks, boat lifts, recreational beaches and clearing of “weeds” for swimming. Many homeowners are unaware of the implications these activities have on the lake’s fishery.



Shoreland - Critical Habitat

No one can blame the homeowners for wanting to get the most out of their lake property, but learning how to use their land in harmony with nature can be beneficial to both the landowner and all the creatures of nature that depend on a healthy shoreline. A great source for information of how to manage shoreland for wildlife can be obtained from the Minnesota Shoreland Management Resource Guide online through the Minnesota DNR.

One organization that works with landowners in preserving land to protect water quality and preserve environmentally sensitive shoreland, streams, fish and wildlife habitats, wetlands, key forests tracts, and scenic vistas is the Northern Waters Land Trust (formerly the Leech Lake Area Watershed Foundation). This organization is a non-profit 501©3 organization working in the north central Minnesota counties of Cass, Crow Wing, Hubbard and Aitkin. Their conservation efforts focus on an area that encompasses six major watersheds, 4.2 million acres, includes 2,235 lakes and 3,400 miles of streams and rivers.

Since 1995, the Northern Waters Land Trust has protected more than 3,463 acres of critical fish and wildlife habitat, and 159,136 feet of sensitive shoreland. The organization has completed 64 land projects to date. These accomplishments have been achieved by working with private land owners and partnerships with government agencies and other conservation organizations.

The Northern Waters Land Trust became accredited by the Land Trust Alliance in the summer of 2019. This designation allows the organization to hold land in perpetuity. To learn more about the trust and how you might get involved they can be contacted at; northernwaterslandtrust.org.

The Northern Waters Land Trust is one of the many organizations in Minnesota that are having a real impact on land use and preservation of our natural resources. There are many lakes in Minnesota where development is so dense that it is too late to do much to preserve shoreland habitat. The effort now is to take good care of those areas where there can still be a positive impact on preserving vital natural resources. Preserving land is really important. Think about that the next time you see a crappie or bass sitting on a nest in two feet of water!!