

PROTECTING OUR LAKES: PROMOTING POLICIES THAT MAKE A DIFFERENCE



Why shoreland protection matters

Oxford Township's lakes provide wildlife habitat, recreational opportunities, and scenic beauty. With increasing development, we have an opportunity to strengthen protections that ensure long-term water quality and preserve the character of our lakes. The statewide MN Model Shoreland Ordinance can provide a solid foundation, and by building on it with clearer, locally tailored policies, we can help safeguard these resources for future generations.

Stronger policies can help maintain lake health and attract property owners who value undeveloped shorelines, natural beauty, and quiet waters. Additionally, cleaner lakes support higher property values, ensuring long-term investment in the area.

Current protections under the MN Model Shoreland Ordinance

The ordinance provides a foundation for shoreline management across the different classifications of Minnesota lakes, including:



Setback Requirements – Limits how close structures can be built to the water.



Lot size and widths – Establishes minimum lot sizes and widths to prevent overdevelopment and maintain natural buffers



Impervious Surface Limits: Restricts the percentage of land that can be covered by buildings, driveways, and other hard surfaces to reduce runoff.



Vegetation Protection Standards: Encourages buffer zones to prevent erosion and filter pollutants.



Septic System Regulations – Requires compliance with wastewater treatment standards.



Land Use Controls – Guides the type and intensity of development allowed near shorelines to help minimize environmental impacts and preserve lake character.

Key weaknesses in existing protections

Even with baseline protections, there are gaps in the model ordinance language that can lead to degradation in water quality and lake ecosystems. These include:



Frequent Variances and Exceptions – Many property owners request and receive variances, which weaken protections and allow for more development closer to the water.



Stormwater Management Gaps – The ordinance does not require comprehensive stormwater plans for all developments, meaning increased runoff from hard surfaces can bring pollutants into our lakes.



Inconsistent Protection of Shoreline Vegetation – While vegetation buffers are encouraged, enforcement is inconsistent, and landowners may remove critical shoreline vegetation, leading to erosion and reduced filtration of runoff pollutants.

Opportunities for stronger, clearer policies

To better safeguard Oxford Township's lakes, we can consider adopting enhanced local protections, such as:

- **More Protective Lot Size and Width Standards** – Adjust minimum lot sizes and widths to better prevent overdevelopment and maintain natural buffers.
- **Improved Stormwater Management Requirements** – Mandate the use of rain gardens, permeable surfaces, and buffer zones to minimize runoff.
- **Stricter Variance Standards** – Limit when and how variances are granted to prevent unnecessary encroachments into sensitive shoreland areas.
- **Stronger Shoreline Buffers** – Expand required vegetative buffer zones to provide greater filtration of pollutants and prevent erosion, with clear enforcement pathways.
- **Clear Land Use Expectations** – Promote policies that attract property owners who appreciate the quiet, undeveloped nature of our lakes and discourage attempts to convert them into high-use recreational areas.

Your voice matters!



We want to hear from you! Your input is vital in shaping policies that balance lake protection with responsible development.

Join us at the April 8th Town Hall Meeting to learn more and share your thoughts, or share your feedback directly with us by calling (763) 689-3271.

