

Restoring Hardened Shorelines
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Many shorelines have been hardened with concrete, steel, gabions or armour stone to prevent erosion. This usually results in the elimination of most of the shoreline vegetation and cover that is most important to fish and other wildlife. While the hardening of one property may not seriously affect the health of the lake, the cumulative effect of many hardened properties can seriously impair the lake's ecological functions. When spawning beds, feeding areas and nesting sites are reduced, the populations of wildlife that the lake can sustain are also reduced.

There are several simple techniques that can be used to restore some vegetation to severely hardened shorelines. If the shoreline has been rip rapped or armour stoned plants and shrubs can be planted between the stones. Willow or red osier dogwood whips will often root if they are simply inserted through the stones and into the wet soil.

If it is impossible to get to the soil between the stones or if there is solid concrete, vines such as wild grape or Virginia creeper and be planted where there is soil and encouraged to grow over the concrete. If the water is not too deep at the foot of the concrete emergent aquatic plants such as cattails, rushes and pickerelweed can be planted.

Many of the hardened structures fail over time. When they do and repair is required it is an opportunity to also repair some of the ecological damage. Techniques such as bioengineering work with the forces of nature to stabilize the shoreline and prevent erosion. Once established, tree and shrub roots help hold the banks in place while providing shade and cover for wildlife. Plants also reduce the austere, sterile look of concrete and stone.