

**Lakeshore Properties  
Resource Guide  
for  
Walworth County**

**Website:** This guide available on the Walworth County Land Use and Resource Management website: <https://www.co.walworth.wi.us/365/Land-Use-Resource-Management>

**Last Updated:** March 2022, will be updated as needed.

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# Lakeshore Properties Resource Guide for Walworth County

The *Lakeshore Properties Resource Guide* is designed to provide lakeshore property owners, managers, residents, (and those that work on those properties) the resources they need to know about living on, managing, and working on these properties for the benefit of the lakeshore environment. Construction, landscaping, yard maintenance, lawn care and other practices are different for lakeshore properties. Practices that you might have done on a suburban or urban property can be detrimental to the lake environment, so lakeshore properties need to be managed and maintained to preserve the shoreline, water quality, and overall lake environment.

**How to Use this Guide:** This guide is a collection of links to credible and trustworthy resources, that are free from bias and backed by research and evidence. They are organized by the categories listed in the Table of Contents. You will find additional useful information on the websites linked in this guide.

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# Useful Definitions

There are many terms to be aware of when living on or managing a lakeshore property. We've compiled a few here to help you get familiar with some of the more common terms.

**Lake Associations and Lake Districts:** There are organizations created throughout Wisconsin to help preserve and protect our lakes. Lake organizations have evolved into a few basic types over the years. For a listing of lake associations and lake districts in Walworth County, search for Walworth County using the following site:

<https://www.uwsp.edu/cnr-ap/UWEXLakes/Pages/organizations/lakelist/default.aspx>

**Lake Associations** are usually voluntary organizations with members who own land on or near a lake. They can be involved in various levels of lake management activities and vary from well-run lake management groups to loose-knit social groups. Lake associations may operate under diverse titles, but the purpose is normally the same. In most, it is to maintain, protect, and improve the quality of a lake, its fisheries, and its watershed. A lake association can be formed when any number of individuals concerned with lake issues decides to deal with them in an organized manner. Your local lake association can be a valuable source of information and resources. Find a list of Walworth County Lake associations at <http://walworthcountylakes.org/>

A **Lake District** is a specialized unit of government designed to manage a lake or group of lakes. Lake districts have the ability to tax property within the district. Lake districts have a unique blend of powers and governance provisions tailored to fit the needs of local lake communities. Unlike a lake association, a lake district is a governmental body with statutory responsibilities to the resource, local citizens and taxpayers. More information about lake districts can be found at UW-Stevens Point Extension Lakes site:

<https://www.uwsp.edu/cnr-ap/UWEXLakes/Pages/organizations/districts/default.aspx>

**Professionals:** At some point you might need or want to hire a professional or company to do work on your property. It is important to know that not everyone might have the same knowledge, skills or experience specific to lakeshore properties. Review the differences between some of the types of professionals that you may hire. Also look at the [Questions to Ask When Hiring a Professional](#) later in this guide.

An **Arborist** is a professional who specializes in the care of urban/suburban trees in our cities and yards. A "certified arborist" has gone through specific training and testing, and commits to ongoing professional education to maintain their knowledge and

credentials. Certification is issued through the [Wisconsin Arborist Association \(WAA\)](#) under rules of the [International Society of Arboriculture \(ISA\)](#). Hiring a certified and fully insured arborist for any major tree work is strongly recommended. You can find a certified arborist in Wisconsin from the WAA website:

<https://www.waa-isa.org/find-certified-arborist/>

An **Aquatic Plant Specialist** is someone who has expertise in plants that grow in water, or hydrophytes; this may relate to natural ponds or shorelines, or to more built situations like backyard ponds and tub gardens. There are specialty nurseries that provide aquatic plants, but be cautious – some non-native aquatic plants can be highly invasive and should not be planted in our native lakes and streams. You can find more information on the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources website for aquatic invasive species: <https://dnr.wisconsin.gov/topic/Invasives/prevention.html>

A **Contractor** is typically a professional or company that builds, whether larger structures like homes, or hardscape features such as patios and decks; often, this latter category is referred to as a “landscape contractor.” While there are professional associations, not all contractors are members or might be licensed/insured. When looking for a contractor, you should review past work and verify references.

A **Landscaper** is typically a professional that cares for the urban/suburban landscape. Some landscapers only do maintenance, while others may provide a full range of design/build/maintenance services. There are no formal professional requirements for someone to say they are a landscaper. When looking for a landscaper, you should review past work and verify references.

A **Native Plant Specialist** is someone who has expertise in working with native plants, or the plant species that were present prior to European settlement of the region several hundred years ago. A native plant specialist may or may not have landscaping knowledge, and most (but not all) landscapers know little about native plants. Wisconsin has a number of native plant societies. Here in Walworth County, the Prairie Enthusiasts have excellent information: <https://www.theprairieenthusiasts.org/>

**Natural Areas Management** is the application of restoration ecology science to implement field practices that help native ecosystems re-establish or recover. For example, a natural areas manager might plow the field and plant prairie seeds, then work over time to eliminate invasive species and return periodic fire to keep the prairie

healthy. The professional organization is the Natural Areas Association:  
<https://naturalareas.org/>

**Restoration Ecology** is the science of putting back the pieces of a region's native landscape, the ecosystems and plant communities that existed prior to settlement. A **restoration ecologist** works to recreate or rehabilitate systems like prairies, wetlands, savannas and woodlands. The professional organization is the Society for Ecological Restoration (SER), and our regional chapter is the Midwest-Great Lakes:  
<https://chapter.ser.org/midwestgreatlakes/>

## General Information

Responsible management of lakeshore properties is a key factor in keeping our lakes and shorelines beautiful, functional, and pollution free for the enjoyment of everyone. Here are some general resources to get you started about what it means to live by the lake or manage a lakeshore property.

Protecting and Restoring Shorelands

<https://dnr.wi.gov/topic/ShorelandZoning/documents/WT-748.pdf>

Best Practices and Regulations for Shoreline Property Owners

<https://dnr.wisconsin.gov/topic/ShorelandZoning/Care/explore.html>

Protecting Your Waterfront Investment

<https://www.uwsp.edu/cnr-ap/UWEXLakes/Documents/resources/bookstore/ProtectingWaterfrontInvestment-051421-DIGITAL.pdf>

Shoreline Living Publication

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/15PRxLWcclcKIIKtzBX3ipD0JkccTMXdN/view?usp=sharing>

Walworth County Lakes Program - Homeowner Guide

<https://www.co.walworth.wi.us/393/Homeowner-Guide>

Understanding Ordinary High Water Mark (OHWM)

<https://dnr.wi.gov/topic/shorelandzoning/documents/ordinaryhighwatermark.pdf>

# Landscaping Practices

Suburban-style landscaping practices that we have all become accustomed to, and that have been popular since the early 20th century, can be detrimental when situated by a lake environment. Thankfully, there are many resources available to provide guidance on how to restore our shorelands (watershed) to maintain your property and a healthy lake.

## Lawn Care

Wisconsin's Phosphorus Rule

<https://dnr.wisconsin.gov/topic/Wastewater/Phosphorus>

Lawn to Lake, Midwest – Natural lawn care quiz (how is your lawn care practices impacting local water quality?)

<https://lawntolakemidwest.org/resources/natural-lawn-care-quiz/>

## Shoreline Gardens

Shoreline Alterations: Natural Buffers and Lakescaping

[https://www.uwsp.edu/cnr-ap/UWEXLakes/Documents/ecology/shoreland/shoreline\\_alterations\\_lakescaping.pdf](https://www.uwsp.edu/cnr-ap/UWEXLakes/Documents/ecology/shoreland/shoreline_alterations_lakescaping.pdf)

Managing the Water's Edge, Making Natural Connections - Southeastern Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission (SEWRPC)

<http://www.sewrpc.org/SEWRPCFiles/Environment/RecentPublications/ManagingtheWatersEdge-brochure.pdf>

A Homeowners Guide to Native Shoreline Gardens

<https://www.co.walworth.wi.us/DocumentCenter/View/575/Homeowner-Guide-to-Native--Shoreline-Gardens-PDF>

NRCS Wisconsin Biology Technical Note 1: Shoreland Habitat

[https://socwisconsin.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/10/Biology\\_Tech\\_Note\\_1.pdf](https://socwisconsin.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/10/Biology_Tech_Note_1.pdf)

Rain Gardens – A Guide for Homeowners and Landscapers

<https://dnr.wi.gov/topic/Stormwater/documents/RainGardenManual.pdf>

DNR General Yard Care “Do Your Share”

<https://dnr.wi.gov/files/PDF/pubs/wa/wa073.pdf>

Storm Water Construction Technical Standard

[https://dnr.wisconsin.gov/topic/Stormwater/standards/const\\_standards.html](https://dnr.wisconsin.gov/topic/Stormwater/standards/const_standards.html)

Storm Water Post-Construction Technical Standard

[https://dnr.wisconsin.gov/topic/Stormwater/standards/postconst\\_standards.html](https://dnr.wisconsin.gov/topic/Stormwater/standards/postconst_standards.html)

## Improving Your Shoreland Property

Healthy Lakes and Rivers - <https://healthylakeswi.com>

The Healthy Lakes and Rivers Program strives to protect and restore the health of Wisconsin lakes and rivers by increasing property owner participation in habitat restoration and runoff and erosion control projects. Their website provides resources for best practices and technical guidance to improve habitat and water quality on your shoreland property. Also, the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources has competitive Healthy Lakes & Rivers grants (see Grants section).

Choosing Best Practices: What’s right for your property?

<https://healthylakeswi.com/best-practices/choosing-best-practices/>

Shoreland Evaluation Tool - “Score My Shore”

<https://survey.healthylakeswi.com/>

Decision Tool: Managing Runoff with Healthy Lakes and Rivers Practices

[https://erc.cals.wisc.edu/healthylakesgrants/files/2020/06/HLDecisionTool\\_MngRunoff.pdf](https://erc.cals.wisc.edu/healthylakesgrants/files/2020/06/HLDecisionTool_MngRunoff.pdf)

Self-Evaluation Checklist for Waterfront Runoff

<https://healthylakeswi.com/files/2020/07/Self-Evaluation-Checklist.pdf?x36223>

Controlling Runoff and Erosion from Your Waterfront Property

<https://healthylakeswi.com/wp-content/blogs.dir/16/files/2016/03/Healthy-Lakes-Diver-sion-Rock-Infiltration-Technical-Guidance.pdf>

Healthy Lakes 350 2Ft Native Planting Companion Guide

<https://healthylakeswi.com/wp-content/blogs.dir/16/files/2016/03/Healthy-Lakes-350ft-2-Native-Planting-Technical-Guidance.pdf>

Fish Sticks Guide

<https://healthylakeswi.com/files/2016/03/Healthy-Lakes-Fish-Sticks-Technical-Guidance.pdf?x36223>

## Healthy Lakes and Rivers Fact Sheets

Diversion

<https://healthylakeswi.com/wp-content/blogs.dir/16/files/2019/02/Diversion-HealthyLakesFactSheetSeries.pdf?x36223>

Fish Sticks

<https://healthylakeswi.com/files/2020/06/FishSticks-HealthyLakeFactSheetSeries2020.pdf?x36223>

Native Plantings

<https://erc.cals.wisc.edu/healthylakesgrants/files/2020/09/NativePlantings-HealthyLakeFactSheetSeries2020.pdf>

Rain Garden

<https://healthylakeswi.com/files/2019/02/RainGarden-HealthyLakesFactSheetSeries-1.pdf?x36223>

Rock Infiltration

<https://healthylakeswi.com/files/2020/06/RockInfiltration-HealthyLakeFactSheetSeries2020.pdf?x36223>

## Invasive species (both aquatic and terrestrial)

**Invasive species** are defined as "nonindigenous species whose introduction causes or is likely to cause economic or environmental harm or harm to human health." In other words, invasive species are plants and animals that originated from somewhere else and were introduced here intentionally or accidentally. Invasive species directly impact the environment by reducing all of the following: biodiversity, habitat quality, land value and quality, crop productivity and incur high costs to control them. There may be direct human health impacts and reduced recreational opportunities. We all have a responsibility to stop the spread of invasive species.

Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (DNR) - Invasive Species

<https://dnr.wisconsin.gov/topic/Invasives>

Invasive Species Terminology - prohibited/restricted/caution/non-restricted

<https://dnr.wisconsin.gov/topic/Invasives/terminology.html>

Terrestrial Invasive Species

<https://dnr.wi.gov/topic/Invasives/species.asp?filterBy=Terrestrial&filterVal=Y>

Aquatic Invasive Species

<https://dnr.wi.gov/lakes/invasives/>

Zebra Mussels

<https://dnr.wisconsin.gov/topic/Invasives/fact/Zebra.html>

Wetland Invasive Species

<https://dnr.wi.gov/topic/Invasives/species.asp?filterBy=Wetland&filterVal=Y>

Southeastern Wisconsin Invasive Species Consortium, Inc. (SEWISC)

<https://sewisc.org/>

Wisconsin First Detector Network (WIFDN) - a citizen science network that empowers people to take action against invasive species through invasive species monitoring, management, and outreach. WIFDN provides training and resources through a combination of webinars, instructional videos, and hands-on workshops, in addition to providing volunteer opportunities to citizen scientists.

<https://fyi.extension.wisc.edu/wifdn/>

# Property Development

When starting any project, contact the [Walworth County Land Use and Resource Management Department](#) *first* to find out what permits might be needed because there are specific regulations and permitting requirements for lakefront property. In Walworth county, the shorelands are considered all lands lying within 1,000 ft. of the ordinary high water mark (OHWM) of navigable lakes, ponds (some wetlands) and flowages and within 300 ft. of navigable rivers, streams or channels. Shoreland Zoning protects water quality, fish and wildlife habitat, recreation, and natural shoreline beauty. To protect the lake and shore, there are significant restrictions on the building of structures, altering the land's contour (grading or filling), or cutting/trimming of trees, shrubbery or vegetation within the shoreland.

## Permitting

Shoreland/Wetland Zoning, What the Landowner Needs to Know

<https://dnr.wi.gov/topic/shorelandzoning/documents/shorelandzoninglandownerinfo.pdf>

Walworth County Shoreland Zoning Guide

<https://www.co.walworth.wi.us/DocumentCenter/View/690/Shoreland-Zoning-Guide>

Walworth County Conservation Plan Guide and Example

<https://www.co.walworth.wi.us/DocumentCenter/View/623/Vegetation-Removal-Packet-PDF>

WI-DNR Riprap Erosion Control (may require a DNR permit, requires a Walworth County Land Disturbance/Erosion Control permit)

<https://dnr.wisconsin.gov/topic/Waterways/shoreline/erosioncontrol-riprap.html>

WI-DNR Withdrawals and Irrigation (may require a DNR permit, requires a Walworth County Land Disturbance/Erosion Control permit)

[https://dnr.wisconsin.gov/topic/Waterways/water\\_levels\\_crossings/irrigation.html](https://dnr.wisconsin.gov/topic/Waterways/water_levels_crossings/irrigation.html)

Walworth County (LURM) Shoreland Zoning Summary Guide

<https://www.co.walworth.wi.us/DocumentCenter/View/690/Shoreland-Zoning-Guide-PDF>

Walworth County (LURM) Land Disturbance, Erosion Control and Storm Water

<https://www.co.walworth.wi.us/394/Land-Disturbance-Erosion-Control-Storm-W>

Technical Standard – Permeable Pavement 1008

[https://dnr.wisconsin.gov/sites/default/files/topic/Stormwater/1008\\_PermeablePavement\\_06-2021.pdf](https://dnr.wisconsin.gov/sites/default/files/topic/Stormwater/1008_PermeablePavement_06-2021.pdf)

## Construction Erosion Control Guides

Erosion Control for Home Builders

<https://cdn.shopify.com/s/files/1/0145/8808/4272/files/GWQ001.pdf>

Wisconsin Construction Site Erosion Control Field Guide

<https://dnr.wi.gov/topic/stormWater/documents/WIconstECfieldGuide.pdf>

## Piers, docks, boathouses and buoys

Be aware that there are specific ordinances relating to building *any* structures along the shoreline. These ordinances have changed over time and many homeowners have structures that might be grandfathered in based on previous ordinances. Don't assume that because you see something on your neighbors property that new construction of the same would be allowed under current regulations. Contact the [Walworth County Land Use and Resource Management Department](#) with questions.

WI-DNR, piers, docks and buoys

<https://dnr.wisconsin.gov/topic/Waterways/recreation/piers.html>

WI-DNR Pier Planner

[https://dnr.wi.gov/topic/waterways/factsheets/pier\\_planner\\_082012.pdf](https://dnr.wi.gov/topic/waterways/factsheets/pier_planner_082012.pdf)

Boat Shelters

[https://dnr.wisconsin.gov/topic/Waterways/recreation/boat\\_shelter.html](https://dnr.wisconsin.gov/topic/Waterways/recreation/boat_shelter.html)

Boat Houses

[https://dnr.wisconsin.gov/topic/Waterways/recreation/boathouse\\_repair.html](https://dnr.wisconsin.gov/topic/Waterways/recreation/boathouse_repair.html)

# Questions to Ask When Hiring a Professional

Before you hire a professional, take some time to ask relevant questions. Treat each conversation as a two-way street. These questions help you find the right fit and ensure credibility. In addition to learning about your contractor, landscaper, or other professional, communicate your needs. A credible professional will let you know whether your expectations are realistic and a good fit for their services. When talking with landscaping companies, find out about current trends and options to save you money. Learn about plant options that need less water or work better in the shade, while complementing your yard and home.

There are examples of some of the general questions you could ask when hiring a professional:

- What type of services do you offer?
- Do you offer a free consultation?
- Are you bonded and insured?
- How long have you been working on these types of projects?
- Do you have specialists on staff?
- What kind of guarantee do you offer?
- Can I get a copy of the plans?
- Do you have client references?

Then, follow up with some more specific questions during the consultation:

- Do you know about erosion protection for my shoreline?
- Do you know about native plants for shoreline (or other) plantings?
- Do you know how to manage water runoff and flooding on my property?
- Are you familiar with what type of permit I need and how will you help me with permits?
- Have you worked with the Walworth County Land Use & Resource Management (LURM) department before?
- What do I need to know about maintenance after the project?
- How do you charge (hourly or by the project), and what is your rate?
- How long will the installation take?
- Can I save money by bundling services or promising future work?
- Can you show me examples of your previous work on similar projects?

## Educational Resources

There are many available and reliable resources to help you learn how to manage your property in ways with the least amount of environmental harm. This alphabetical listing contains some of the local and statewide organizations or resources available to help you.

### **Extension Lakes, UW Stevens Point College of Natural Resources -**

<https://www.uwsp.edu/cnr-ap/UWEXLakes/Pages/default.aspx>

Extension Lakes is a team of education professionals dedicated to preserving our Wisconsin legacy of lakes through education, communication, and collaboration. They work with thousands of people interested in lakes, including waterfront property owners and over 750 lake organizations in Wisconsin, and coordinate a number of programs and projects to assist those concerned with the future of our lakes. Their website has a Resources page that has MANY resources available.

### **Geneva Lakes Conservancy - <https://genevalakeconservancy.org/>**

Geneva Lake Conservancy's Conservation@Home program is an education and recognition program for homeowners for their earth-conscious choices in home landscape, as well as water conservation and protection efforts. Conservation@Home is designed to encourage landowners to become actively involved in the conservation effort. We can all contribute to environmental improvement – one yard at a time. See a few homes that have already received their certifications [here](#).

### **Kettle Moraine Land Trust (KMLT) - <https://kmlandtrust.org/>**

The mission of Kettle Moraine Land Trust is to preserve and protect the natural heritage of the Southern Kettle Moraine region through land conservancy and resource management. KMLT works to permanently protect natural areas in partnership with local communities and landowners. KMLT establishes and maintains nature preserves and also provides educational programs to landowners.

### **Walworth County Land Use & Resource Management (LURM) -**

<https://www.co.walworth.wi.us/365/Land-Use-Resource-Management>

The Land Use and Resource Management (LURM) Department is responsible for the implementation of the County's Planning, Zoning, Sanitation, and Conservation programs and regulations. LURM is located at the Government Center ("Old Court House", on the square in downtown Elkhorn). The LURM offices are located on the second floor, accessible via the center stairwell or main elevator. Please contact LURM with any questions you may have. An appointment should be made before coming to the office if you may need assistance from our staff. Making an appointment allows each customer with the best opportunity to receive the

service that is deserved. LURM's goal is to ensure your compliance with regulations and sound land ethics. We are here as a resource for you, to provide information, technical and when possible, financial assistance.

**Wild Ones - Kettle Moraine Chapter - <https://kmwildones.wixsite.com/kmwildones>**

Wild Ones is a national nonprofit organization with local chapters that promotes environmentally sound landscaping practices to preserve biodiversity through the preservation, restoration and establishment of native plant communities. Examples of activities include monthly meetings, native landscape/garden tours, bulk native plant sale/purchases at very affordable prices, show me/help me visits, and members help other members with control burns.

**Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (DNR) - <https://dnr.wisconsin.gov/>**

The Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (DNR) is dedicated to working with Wisconsinites while preserving and enhancing the natural resources of Wisconsin. In partnership with individuals and organizations, DNR staff manage fish, wildlife, forests, parks, air and water resources while promoting a healthy, sustainable environment and a full range of outdoor opportunities. There are many resources on the DNR website for invasive species, water quality, lake health and more.

**Wisconsin Native Plant Nurseries - <https://widnr.widen.net/s/rfsbfc22w6/nh0698>**

This directory lists companies, individuals, and organizations that may be able to provide you with seed or plants native to Wisconsin or the Midwest. This directory was compiled by the Natural Heritage Conservation Program, Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources. Inclusion in this directory does not imply any endorsement or recommendation by the Wisconsin DNR or by any other organization/individual that contributed to the Walworth County Lakeshore Resource Guide.

**Wisconsin Restoration Consultants - <https://widnr.widen.net/s/ccwrwvshv/nh0699>**

This directory lists companies and individuals that operate as consultants or contractors in Wisconsin and the surrounding areas. This directory was compiled by the Natural Heritage Conservation Program, Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources. Inclusion in this directory does not imply any endorsement or recommendation by the Wisconsin DNR or by any other organization/individual that contributed to the Walworth County Lakeshore Resource Guide.

**University of Wisconsin-Madison Division of Extension Horticulture Program - <https://hort.extension.wisc.edu>**

The UW-Madison's Extension Horticulture Program provides research-based horticulture information to Wisconsinites so they can make gardening decisions that keep their plants healthy while protecting the environment. We provide research- and evidence-based

horticulture management education, resources and decision-making tools to home gardeners and commercial horticulture practitioners. For Walworth County, contact the Extension Walworth County Office with your gardening questions: <https://walworth.extension.wisc.edu/>

**Urban Wildlife Project** - <https://urbanwildlifeproject.wisc.edu/>

The Urban Wildlife Project helps residents and wildlife managers in urban and suburban areas learn about wildlife habitat, identify wildlife management plans and implement do-it-yourself projects. By working together, individuals, neighbors and communities can ensure a vibrant future for our urban and suburban natural spaces and the urban wildlife species that call them home.

## Grants and Funding Opportunities

Grants are monetary awards that do not have to be paid back. The Wisconsin DNR administers many grant programs. You can search for grant and reimbursement programs on this page: <https://dnr.wisconsin.gov/aid/Grants.html>. Specifically, the following two websites are grant programs for lakeshore properties.

WI DNR Surface Water Grants

<https://dnr.wisconsin.gov/aid/SurfaceWater.html>

Healthy Lakes and Rivers Grants

<https://healthylakeswi.com/grants/>

Additionally, you may find other grants that support efforts to control and prevent the spread of invasive species. You can view a listing here: <http://invasivespecies.wi.gov/financial-assistance/>