

Vermont Shorelands Protection Act Goes Into Effect July 1st

– By Susan Warren, Watershed Division

This spring the Vermont Legislature passed the Vermont Shoreland Protection Act (H. 526), which applies to activities within 250 feet of a lake's mean water level for all lakes greater than 10 acres in size. The Act, effective July 1st, 2014, establishes a new state regulation that guides shoreland development and will be administered by the Lakes and Ponds Shoreland Permit Program.



The intent of the Act is to prevent degradation of water quality in lakes, preserve habitat and natural stability of shorelines, and maintain the economic benefits of lakes and their shorelands. The Act outlines clear standards for the creation of cleared and impervious areas in shorelands while seeking to balance good shoreland management and development. For development or redevelopment projects occurring within 250 feet of a lake's mean water level, with some exemptions, the Act requires all shoreland owners to either register or apply for a permit.

The Act recognizes that many shoreland properties in Vermont are already developed or are small parcels that cannot meet the new standards. These parcels are "grandfathered," legally developed properties and are not required to meet the new shoreland standards unless the owner proposes redevelopment. In the case of redevelopment on a "grandfathered" parcel, the Lakes and Ponds Shoreland Permit Program will work with homeowners so that standards are met to the extent possible.

The Lakes and Ponds Shoreland Permit Program kicked off a summer of information sessions and field trainings at the 2014 Vermont Lake Seminar with the goal of educating shoreland owners, municipal officials, foresters, septic installers, and a variety of other stakeholders about the Shoreland Protection Act. For a schedule of the information and training sessions, which are free and open to the public, visit the Shoreland Permit Program [webpage](#).