

THE LAKES AND RIVERS : A LIVING AND PROTECTED HABITAT

Gatineau, February 2, 2005 – With the spring and the summer coming soon, people start planning works to be done on their properties near lakes and rivers. The Quebec Ministry of Environment and the Quebec Ministry of Natural Resources, Wildlife and Parks (Outaouais region) wish to remind you that lakes and rivers as well as the shore strips along them are living and protected habitats. It is therefore important to check out if permits are needed before doing any type of work, even on private properties.

Several types of works are forbidden in accordance with municipal bylaws or with provincial laws and regulations which integrate the *Politique de protection des rives, du littoral et des plaines inondables* (Politique for the protection of shores, littoral and floodplains). For instance:

- **Cutting vegetation** (trees, shrubs, and herbaceous plants) inside the 10-meter (sometimes 15-meter) wide shore strip alongside any lake, river or stream (except for a 5-meter wide pedestrian access to the water and the removal of dead or sick trees). The usual practice of putting lawn on the shore down to the water is strictly forbidden ;
- **Digging or filling** inside the shore strip and in the bed of any lake, river or stream;
- **Laying boat launches** for private purposes;
- **Adding sand** to create a beach;
- **Removing aquatic plants** (except those jamming a water pipe or impeding access to a wharf);
- **Laying wharfs on cribs or casing** (only floating wharfs or those on wheels, poles or piles are allowed);
- **Building boathouses.**

Some types of works may be authorized under some conditions, but in most cases an **authorization must be previously obtained from the Ministry of Natural Resources, Wildlife and Parks** as well as a **municipal permit** before starting works. For instance :

- **Stabilizing shore** in case of erosion or land loss (natural stabilization methods will be recommended);
- **Building or repairing retaining walls** (rocks, blocks, gabions, concrete, etc.) alongside water edge : such works are authorized only in special situations. Usually, we recommend to fix the bank and shore strip with natural stabilization methods;
- **Digging to install water supply pipes** in the bed of lakes, rivers or streams.

Any person having done forbidden works or works requiring a previous authorization may be brought before the courts and be sentenced, on top of **paying a fine**, to **restore the site**, an operation which may turn out to be far more costly than the realization of illegal works themselves.

For any information, permit or authorization concerning works in front of water bodies, you should contact your municipality, the Quebec Ministry of Environment or the Quebec Ministry of Natural Resources, Wildlife and Parks.