An Introduction to LakeSmart and Best Management Practices
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**Introduction**
LakeSmart is a Maine Department of Environmental Protection program designed to encourage residents within Maine’s watersheds to adopt ‘lake-friendly’ practices. These best management practices (BMPs) focus on reducing run-off and erosion, specifically on developed shorefront properties, that can contribute to increased nutrient loading and lower water quality. Fortunately, many BMPs, including the use of erosion control mix, increased natural vegetative growth, properly managed foot traffic, and reductions in the use of pesticides and fertilizers, do not require much technical assistance and have been shown to significantly reduce erosion.

**Consider using these Best Management Practices!**

**LakeSmart Evaluation Process**
Property owners who are interested in becoming LakeSmart can contact their lake association and make an appointment for an unofficial evaluation. LakeSmart screeners assess a property in four separate sections: (1) Driveway and Parking Areas, (2) Structures and Septic System, (3) Yard, Recreation Area and Footpaths, and (4) Shorefront and Beach Area. Screeners discuss the strengths and weaknesses of the land, buildings, and shorefront with the home owner, and make non-technical suggestions. They can also provide contact information for LakeSmart certified contractors, gardeners, and other resources like the Youth Conservation Corps. Properties that pass in all four sections by the screener are recommended for an official evaluation.

**Erosion Control Mix (ECM)**
ECM is preferred over other types of mulch because it is composed of larger pieces of organic material – like soil, bark, sand, and stones – woven together to provide stabilized ground cover.

- porous, promotes infiltration
- minimizes runoff without being washed away
- good for cultivated areas, bare soil, pathways
- easy to maintain at the recommended level of 3 – 4”
- no raking or excessive maintenance

Maine DEP website, Erosion Control Mix Fact Sheet (www.maine.gov/dep/blog/doc/watershed/materials.html)

**Less is More...Embrace Naturalization**
Allow nature to take over in barely used areas of your property and along the shorefront. Maintaining multiple tiers of vegetation in the buffer zone can greatly reduce runoff.

- 5 tiers of vegetation
  1. canopy
  2. understory
  3. shrubs (woody, native)
  4. ground cover (flowers, ferns)
  5. duff (fallen vegetation)
- don’t rake up duff
- set mower to at least 2.5 – 3.5”

Maine DEP website, Planting Vegetation Factsheet (www.maine.gov/dep/blog/doc/watershed/materials.html)

**Fertilizers, Pesticides and Herbicides**
Lakes turn “green” when excess phosphorus is loaded into the lake, reducing the beauty and quality of the water. This affects aquatic life, property values and local businesses.

- avoid using fertilizers, pesticides, and herbicides
- spot test for fertilizers
- when necessary, use phosphorus-free fertilizer
- clean up all pet waste

**Rainfall**
Diverting or collecting runoff containing soil and nutrients before it reaches the lake is important to maintaining overall watershed health.

- rain barrels
  - narrow and meandering paths
  - minimize driveways and parking areas

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- Multiple (4) tiers of vegetation
- Naturalized lawn area
- ECM, native shrubs

These BMPs are a good first step toward becoming LakeSmart. Don’t feel overwhelmed – there are a lot of people and resources willing to help you protect and preserve our lakes!