

It's Not Like It Used To Be.

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I suspect that most of us think our lakes area is a very special place. It's special because of the wonderful lakes, forests, wildlife, and a lifestyle we value. We seek to spend our free time at the lake. We look longingly forward every winter to precious summer time up north. We bring our families and invite our friends to share this unique place. We have fond memories of our times up here and we dream of sharing all this for generations to come.

So the question is why is it that we do so many seemingly small "little" things that when we add them all together, they decimate and destroy this special place? We do things that will forever change what we value so much. We ignore our "little" abuses and excuse them as being inconsequential. We tell ourselves that the minor things won't matter. But they do matter. They all add up. They pile up into big things. The little things mean our waters aren't as clear and clean anymore. They result in a decline in fishing. It means our shorelands are eroding. It means weeds and creatures we don't want are brought in. It means wildlife we come here to be near is going or gone.

The "little" transgressions include:

- Increases in phosphates due to fertilizers, soaps and detergents, non-compliant septic systems, yard waste and pet waste, and even our campfires at the lake's edge. The result is murky water, abundant weeds, and low oxygen levels in the water in our lakes.
- Increases in precipitation runoff across those beautiful lawns-to-the-lake that isn't slowed or filtered by natural buffers near the shore. The result: More phosphates running directly into the lakes.
- Even more runoff from more impervious surfaces like roofs, driveways, patios, and decks.
- Pushing to challenge and change our zoning ordinances and regulations that have been designed to protect what we all value here. Some might win their battle but we all will lose the war.
- Shoreline erosion caused by large wakes while boating too close to shore.
- Boating too fast and too close to shore with large wakes causing erosion.

It's hard to understand why we come to this paradise because it is wild and natural and then try to make it so civilized. We want to be around nature but we apparently want to try to tame and control nature.

So ultimately, we'll end up destroying what we value so much. We'll devastate the lakes, wipeout the forests, chase away the wildlife, and compromise the lifestyle we say we love. We'll have to look elsewhere for someplace to spend our free time. We'll have to find a new place to bring family and friends. We'll still have our memories but not our dreams for our next generation.

Despite the fact that we have over 10,000 lakes in Minnesota, we, and our neighbors across the state, are doing the same "little things" to all our lakes. And, unfortunately, they stopped making lakes and beautiful places like this eons ago.

Something to think about – and maybe do something about it. It's the little things that count.