

Shoreline Protection According to Swedish Environmental Legislation

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SUMMARY

The Swedish environmental legislation plays an important part in the national environmental efforts and is stated in The Environmental Code. The Code replaces 15 previous Acts that were repealed on its entry in 1999. The Code's legislative framework aims to advance sustainable development that will assure a healthy and sound environment for present and future generations. The Swedish countryside contains thousands of lakes and freshwater streams. All this water constitutes important habitats for many organisms. These environments are also valuable for relaxation, recreation and drinking-water supply for all living beings. In order to secure these values, there is specific legislation regarding shoreline protection. The aim of this legislation is to protect shore areas from settlements so that natural and recreational values are conserved. Shoreline protection includes land and water areas within 100 meters from the shoreline, based on mean sea water level. Areas with high environmental values may have an extended shoreline protection of a maximum of 300 meters. According to the Planning and Building Act, it is possible to apply for exemption from the shoreline protection for certain construction. Sweden is known as a country with long coastlines, huge forests and a seasonal climate. One of the joys of living in Sweden is *allemansrätten*, the Right of Public Access. It allows anyone to walk freely in the countryside, travel by boat and swim in someone else's waters and pick mushrooms and berries in the forest. The common principle is that visitors are allowed to walk across properties at a rational distance from houses, yards, gardens and fenced-in areas. With this right comes the responsibility to walk carefully and to show respect for property owners and others. The Right of Public Access has existed for generations in Sweden and it is a part of the national identity of Swedish citizens. This paper presents the principles of shore line protection according to the Environmental Code and implementation issues relating to the Planning and Building Act and what the Right of Public Access means for shoreline areas. Furthermore, it explains the administrative process and what guidelines and regulations apply to shore line protection.