



2025 Environmental Update

....by Peter Helston

At this time of the year, we start preparing for environmental actions on Loon and Turtle Lakes for this coming season. In fact, I just got off the phone with Melissa at the Dorset Environmental Science Centre to enquire when we can expect our water testing kits. Apparently, "they are in the mail!". We both had a good laugh! Water testing has been the cornerstone of our other environmental tasks. We test for phosphates and sodium chloride. I'm happy to report that both numbers are low to moderate over the last 29 years that testing has been going on under the Lake Partner Program. Carol and I do the testing at the same spot on both lakes year after year, just after the ice has gone out. We drop the specimen bottle down about 15 feet and then haul it up once it is full. We do it at that depth before the water table turns over and mixes with the upper layers. This gives us a consistent sample year to year. This sample is then placed in plastic tubes for both phosphate and sodium chloride testing and shipped off by courier to DESC. It is usually simple things like water testing that give us a lot of information on the health of our water. There are two other items that can give outsized results: one is letting your waterfront go a little wild, and the other is ditching the grass. I know I seem to beat the same drum repeatedly, but neither of these actions is difficult or time-consuming. In fact, both are time and money savers. Who needs the Weedman when we are surrounded by weeds? Take a look at your waterfront and plan on leaving a bigger patch this year so more native plants can surprise you with their beauty.

A Closer Look....at Phosphates

As we round the corner into spring, it is worthwhile to reflect on our habits that affect the environment of Loon and Turtle Lakes. Last year, the narrative changed somewhat. Muldrew Lake had the unfortunate circumstance of dealing with a bloom of cyanobacteria, or Blue – Green Algae. This nasty, toxic bacterium usually blooms with excessive heat and where farms or development create an excessive phosphate load in the water. Neither was a factor in the Muldrew Lake bloom, and I don't see Muldrew Lake cottagers as ignoring good environmental practices.

While we can't control the heat summer brings us, we can reduce the phosphates in our water. Phosphate is the main growing ingredient for all aquatic plants and algae. It is the main thing we monitor with water sampling on both our lakes in the spring. The one thing that we all can and should do is let your waterfront grow wild. Active native plants act like a filter and use runoff with phosphates to feed them. If that runoff ends up in the lake, there is the potential for excessive weeds and algae growth in the water. Muldrew Lake is close to us, so if it can happen to their lake, it can happen to Loon or Turtle Lake. This summer, look closely at your property and see if you can let your waterfront go wild.

Road Salt Usage – Affecting our Lakes

Recently, Cottage Life wrote an article highlighting the negative effects of road salt on our lakes and tips on how to use less salt. Find the article here: [This cottager group has a solution](#)

Watersheds Canada – Improve Shoreline Conditions & Water Quality

Watersheds Canada has provided practical and proven ways to restore deteriorating shoreline conditions and improve water quality over the long term. To read more information, please find more info below.





Watersheds
CANADA

Every Shoreline Matters. Every Action Counts.

Watersheds Canada understands that in order to create the greatest impact, they must actively train, provide resources, and help others across Canada. For property owners, waterfront associations, and organizations concerned with the health of their lakes, rivers, and waterfront properties,

Watersheds Canada will provide practical and proven ways to restore deteriorating shoreline conditions and improve water quality over the long-term. People will then have the ability to pass along that same expertise to others in their communities.



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The Natural Edge

Shorelines are one of the richest environments on earth, but they are also among the most threatened. Shorelines are

the “ribbon of life”, where 90% of lake life is born, raised, and fed.

The Natural Edge Program provides shoreline property owners with the tools to naturalize their shoreline by creating a planting plan using native trees, shrubs, and wildflowers. Watersheds Canada supplies all materials and expertise during the process at a reduced cost to the homeowner. We are connected with partners across Canada who use our open access mobile App to deliver this program and make every restoration a success.

Fish Habitats Program

With the steady increase in development along Canada’s lakes and rivers, critical fish habitat is being compromised and degraded. Watersheds Canada, in partnership with local organizations, is working to protect, enhance and restore various freshwater fish habitats. Some of our projects include walleye and trout spawning bed restorations, coldwater creek habitat enhancements, and adding woody debris back into lakes with brush bundle projects.

Love Your Lake

A healthy lake starts with healthy shorelines and we are here to help. Property owners are provided an evaluation report or they can perform a self-assessment. Either way, they get helpful tips for improving the quality of the shoreline and lake.

Developed in partnership with the Canadian Wildlife Federation, Love Your Lake translates science into action. Shorelines are unique and sensitive areas so protecting them benefits the lake and waterfront properties.

Planning for our Shorelands

As demand for development on the shores of Ontario's lakes and rivers increases

dramatically, Watersheds Canada is creating a policy toolkit for municipal decision-makers, freshwater stakeholders, and the public so they have easily accessible land use planning information and policy resources that reference the science of sustainable waterfront development. This education toolkit will help guide waterfront development in a way that protects the integrity of local lakes and rivers.

Freshwater Stewardship Community

This free, virtual community brings together waterfront groups, students, individuals, and organizations to collaborate and share best practice resources to protect freshwater and shoreline areas. It features webinars, networking events, and education resources.

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