# Waterfront Property Owners Information

**Trent Lakes is gifted with abundant lakes and rivers that are enjoyed by our residents, visitors and wildlife.**

You may be a Trent Lakes resident fortunate enough to have property with a lake or river in your backyard. With that comes all the special opportunities to boat, swim, paddle, fish, see wildlife and just enjoy the ever changing views. But, with that also comes a responsibility to be a good steward of the water and the lake environment to preserve it for your family and for future generations to come.

This pamphlet suggests a few of the most important things **you** can do to ensure our water bodies continue to be healthy ecosystems for people, fish, aquatic plants and other life. **THANK YOU!**

**Our Vision:**
*Trent Lakes is proud to be a vibrant, resilient, sustainable, and environmentally friendly community.*

**One of our 5 strategic goals is:**
*To Take the Lead on Initiating Environmental Stewardship for the Community.*

## Natural Shorelines

The few metres below and above the shoreline are a very important **"Ribbon of Life"**. Ninety percent of all lake life is born, raised and fed in the area where the land and water meet. The shallow water and the first 10-15 metres of shoreland form a ribbon of life around lakes and streams that is essential to the survival of many species. This rich and complex habitat supports plants, micro-organisms, insects, amphibians, birds, mammals and fish.

Unaware of the importance of shoreline vegetation, many landowners clear their shorelines and transform them into urban landscapes. They destroy the cattails, bulrushes and other native species. They build retaining walls, docks and boathouses. These changes destroy the balance of the aquatic and shoreline ecosystems. They also alter wildlife habitat, natural beauty and character of our lakes and streams. And they negatively impact the health of the lake or stream.

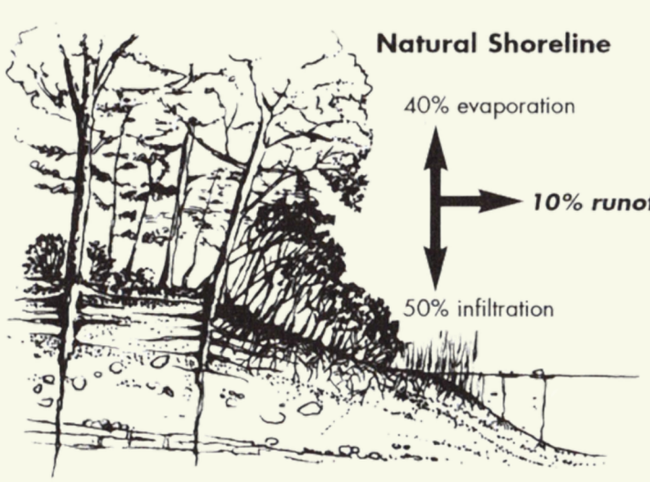
Natural shoreline vegetation plays an important role in preventing soil erosion. Plant roots anchor the soil, preventing shoreland from being washed away by currents, waves and rain. The roots of mature trees reach down to the upper levels of the water table. Dogwood and meadowsweet roots form a web that extends a half metre downward. These native species are far more effective in protecting properties from erosion than the roots of grasses, which only reach 8 cms below the surface.

By preventing erosion and runoff, natural shoreline vegetation also improves water quality. When soil and excess nutrients are washed into the water, fish spawning beds can be destroyed, dissolved oxygen is depleted, and the growth of algae and aquatic plants is encouraged. The deeper roots from native trees, shrubs and grasses intercept groundwater and runoff, and help extract harmful chemicals like phosphorus from the groundwater flow before it enters the waterbody. Shoreline vegetation also improves water quality by shading and cooling shallow water.

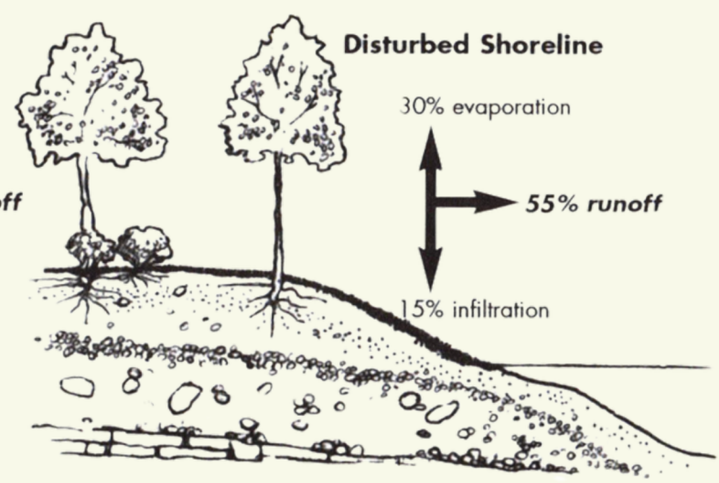
Negative changes in water quality can lead to rapid eutrophication – the aging of a lake. Eutrophication of a lake ultimately changes the kinds and numbers of species that can live there.

A shoreline buffer of native plants captures runoff and contaminants from reaching the water. Protect your shoreline with native plants, shrubs and trees that are best adapted to our region in Canada. As a bonus, tall native grasses and shrubs deter geese from coming up onto your property and leaving their droppings.

**Best Practice** – A healthy buffer zone, or "the ribbon of life", is potentially the most important factor in protecting the quality of water of our lakes for future generations to enjoy. As a best practice, every waterfront property owner should strive to maintain 75% of the buffer zone in its natural state. Programs and assistance are available through Watersheds Canada and local Lake Associations.

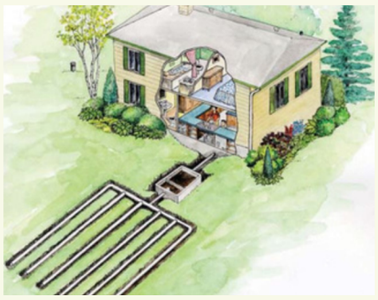



Native vegetation protects water quality from polluted runoff, and helps soil absorb water




Hard surfaces and reduced vegetation increase runoff and and erosion potential, and decrease absorption by the soil.

# Septic Systems



Virtually all residents in Trent Lakes rely on a private septic system for treatment and disposal of their sewage.

Septic systems are made up of:

- a tank
- a network of pipes
- a leach field
- billions of organisms that process your waste

There are many contaminants (nitrate, phosphorus and disease-causing bacteria, viruses and parasites) in wastewater that could enter drinking water, groundwater or surface water. These will negatively affect your health and the environment if your system does not remove most contaminants to acceptable levels.

You are responsible for the maintenance and operation of your septic system. Please do:

1. Obtain a copy of your septic permit. Make sure to not exceed the rated capacity of your system.
2. Never overload your septic. Your septic system needs time to process the waste you put in it, so minimize water use and spread it out over time.
   - Do not have more than 2 guests per bedroom
   - Do not do multiple loads of laundry in 1 day
   - Minimize concurrent water uses (e.g.; laundry, dishwasher, shower, bath)
3. Avoid use of harsh chemicals like bleach, chemical cleaners, phosphorous soaps, and anti-bacterial products. Your septic system needs bacteria to work, so don't put bacteria "killers" down the drain.
4. Have your septic system pumped out regularly, every 2 – 5 years depending on usage, and inspected for proper operation.

# Chemicals, Sprays and Fertilizers

The use of chemical sprays and fertilizers on our properties is a serious threat to the water quality of our lakes and streams and to the aquatic organisms that live in them. Runoff from rainfall and snowmelt can carry these chemicals into our lakes especially when we experience extreme storm events which are becoming more frequent with climate change.

**Insecticides** used to control mosquitoes and other pests when applied to large areas are a threat to other insects including pollinators and can also be washed into our water bodies. In our lakes these chemicals can poison fish and other aquatic organisms. Insecticides need to be used sparingly and not treated as a general spay across a whole property.

**Herbicides** are also a threat to our lakes and streams. If they find their way into water bodies through runoff events, they can kill aquatic plants and disrupt the food chain that supports the aquatic ecosystem. They can also result in conditions favorable to the spread of invasive aquatic plants.

**Road salt** used to melt winter ice is also a serious threat to aquatic ecosystems. It is important to limit use of salt products.

**Fertilizers** used on cottage lawns are also a major threat to our lake water quality. Most lawn fertilizers contain phosphorus which is widely recognized as the key chemical supporting algal blooms in water bodies. Extreme rainfall events can wash phosphorus into our lakes in runoff events. It is strongly suggested that landowners avoid using phosphorus based fertilizers on shore properties.

Maintaining a buffer of natural vegetation on our shorelines helps to reduce surface runoff but it is not totally effective in extreme events. **In order to protect our lakes and streams it is important to avoid or limit the use of all insecticides, herbicides, road salt and phosphorus based fertilizers on our properties.**

The quality and continued health of our many lakes and rivers are very important to all of us. The Municipality of Trent Lakes strives to work with its residents, visitors, and various organizations to preserve and protect our natural resources.

We recognize the important role of the First Nation Communities in the Treaty 20 area. They have provided ongoing stewardship and responsibility for the abundant lakes and rivers in their traditional territory for millennium.

The Municipality of Trent Lakes will continue to build on this relationship with First Nation Peoples to care for our natural resources with a traditional knowledge and scientific lens to protect it for your family and for future generations to come.

The Trent Lakes Official Plan (OP) encourages development that preserves, as much as possible, a site's environmental assets. Specific references include OP Section 9 - Water Resources and OP Section 9.4 - Shoreline Development and Setback.

The Comprehensive Zoning Bylaw B-2014-070 provides a balance of landowner rights with protection of our lakes and rivers. New homes shall be set back at least 30 metres from the high water mark, with minimal disturbance of the native soils and very limited removal of shoreline vegetation. Rebuilds shall maintain, at a minimum, the existing setback from the water and minimize the impact on shoreline vegetation.

## Additional Resources

www.foca.on.ca
www.cohpoa.org
www.naturaledge.watersheds.ca
www.klsa.ca
www.kawarthaconservation.com

**NOTE: New shoreline and tree protection bylaws are under consideration for 2025.**

Municipality of Trent Lakes