

# Lake Conservation Notes

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## Reducing Nonpoint Source Pollution—Protection Tips for Lake Property Owners



**N**onpoint source pollution can come from agricultural land in a lakes watershed or from developed property along its shoreline. How you manage your lake property directly affects the lakes water quality. Listed below are several best management practices (BMPs) that lake property owners can implement to protect and improve your lake's water quality.

- 1. Do not wash boats, pets, or other objects in the lake.**
- 2. Use non-phosphate detergents when washing clothes and dishes at your lake home or cabin.**
- 3. Do not wash cars, lawnmowers or tractors where wash water can drain into the lake.**

Wash water can contain gasoline, oil, and grease removed by cleaning products. Even though some products say "biodegradable", they may contain chemicals harmful to a lakes fragile ecosystem. Grass clippings cleaned from lawnmowers can also place unwanted nutrients like phosphate into the lake. Never place used motor oil on gravel roads or dirt paths to hold down dust. These can enter and pollute both surface and ground water.

- 4. Before fertilizing your lawn or garden, have the soil tested!**

Have your soil tested for both nitrates and phosphates. Apply only the type of nutrient needed at the recommended amount and rate using a calibrated spreader. Never apply fertilizer to hard surfaces such as concrete, asphalt, brick, rock or dirt paths. Fertilizer applied to these surfaces will easily wash away and could enter the lake where it is not needed! Consider placing buffer zones between the lake and your groomed lawn.





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**5. Do not burn leaves, brush, or grass clippings along your shoreline!**

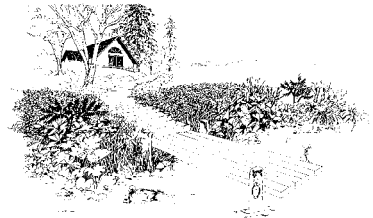
The remaining ash contains nutrients detrimental to your lake. Try composting this material in an area where drainage to the lake is minimal. This compost makes an excellent mulch when worked into gardens and flower beds.

**6. If you remove aquatic plants from the lake by raking or cutting, move them from the shoreline to a compost pile or area where drainage to the lake is minimal.**

Aquatic plants left to decompose on shore will only provide nutrients for further plant growth including algae.

**7. Leave a 20 foot buffer strip of natural vegetation between your yard and the shoreline.**

When natural vegetation, especially trees, is removed from a shoreline, banks weaken and erosion usually follows. Rather than a well-manicured lawn, leave a 20 foot strip of natural vegetation along your shoreline where native trees, shrubs, grasses and herbaceous plants can grow. Buffer strips can retain excess nutrients and trap sediments from yard runoff before reaching the lake. Careful pruning of shoreline trees and shrubs can leave open areas to view the lake. Instead of a dirt path, build wooden steps down to the lakes shoreline to prevent erosion from human traffic. If you have already removed the natural vegetation along your shoreline, consider replanting a buffer strip using native vegetation, or leave an undisturbed strip of grass as a buffer strip between your manicured lawn and the shoreline.



**8. Avoid dumping sand to create or replenish beaches on your lake front property.**

Sandy beaches are nice, however dumping sand along your shoreline can create water quality problems. Adding sand to beaches or shorelines increases the rate of sedimentation to the lake. Dumping sand along your shore can damage or destroy natural spawning and nesting sites for fish, and smother bottom dwelling plants and invertebrates that young fish depend upon for food. Sand from gravel pits may contain contaminants like iron, phosphorus, or clay which increases the waters turbidity. If your property has a natural beach, consider yourself lucky!

**9. Reduce the speed of motorboats and jet skis near shorelines!**

The wakes of these crafts can cause shoreline erosion. A speed that produces no wake should be observed when water-skiing or operating your boat or jet ski within 150 feet of the shoreline.

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