

# WATERSHED WATCH

COVERING THE MISSISSIPPI AND RIDEAU VALLEY WATERSHEDS

## Watershed Watch Program



**M**ississippi and Rideau Valley Conservation Authorities and their partners, the Mississippi Valley Lake Stewardship Network, Alliance of Rideau Lakes Associations, Big Rideau Lake Association, Buckshot Lake Association and Farren Lake Property Owners' Association are taking action through **WATERSHED WATCH** to monitor and protect the environmental health of lakes in the watersheds.

The **WATERSHED WATCH** program will accumulate reliable environmental data in order to determine the limits to which lakes can assimilate nutrients. Nutrient enrichment is the greatest threat to recreational lakes. It can cause profuse weed and algal growth that threatens aquatic habitat and results in fundamental changes to a lake's characteristics. The data will be used to encourage shoreline property owners to

undertake restoration projects and to adopt sound stewardship practices. It will be possible to monitor lakes through the **WATERSHED WATCH** program and identify long-term trends in water quality, such as phosphorus, dissolved oxygen, temperature, and water clarity. A cost-effective means of determining the extent of aging (trophic status change) in the lakes, **WATERSHED WATCH** will be used to construct a central database identifying long-term changes in water quality.

For lakes with water quality that does not meet provincial standards, there will be recommendations for remedial measures. Water quality results will be published in concise, easy-to-understand Lake Water Quality Reports and will be made available to shoreline residents and interested parties.

**WATERSHED WATCH** needs volunteers for the program to be a success. Volunteering with **WATERSHED WATCH** is the perfect way to transform your concern for water quality into action. By helping in the actual water sampling procedures, raising the awareness of fellow citizens on water quality issues, or making a cash donation, your help is greatly appreciated. Please contact Mike Yee, **WATERSHED WATCH** Coordinator at (613) 259-2421.

## A Water Quality Update — Phosphorus Levels

Clean and healthy lakes in the Mississippi and Rideau Valley watersheds are essential to the economic health of our local villages and townships. Clean water and unpolluted areas are vital to maintaining and protecting water quality, a flourishing tourism industry, and waterfront property values. **YOUR**

### **PROPERTY VALUES!**

The greatest threat to lakes in the watershed is nutrient enrichment. Too many nutrients causes profuse weed and algal growth, resulting in decreased oxygen levels and degraded fish habitat. Phosphorus is the key nutrient of concern in this process.



Sources of phosphorus include:

- ▶ erosion and runoff from the clearing of shoreline
- ▶ garden and lawn fertilizers
- ▶ leachate from septic systems
- ▶ high phosphate soap products

Taking a preventative approach to water quality issues will help your lake stay healthy. The Ontario Ministry of the Environment recommends that citizens:

- ▶ ensure your septic system is functioning properly
- ▶ use liquid dishwasher soap, which contains only 33% of the phosphate content of most powders
- ▶ use no-phosphate laundry soap
- ▶ eliminate the use of synthetic fertilizers on your cottage lawn
- ▶ retain natural vegetation on the property, especially the shoreline.

## Zebra Mussel Update

Invasive species are non-native plants and animals that invade ecosystems and start disrupting the natural balance of nature. The zebra mussel is one invasive species that is threatening to colonize the Mississippi and Rideau Valley watersheds.

In the Rideau Valley watershed, this unwelcome visitor from central Eurasia has colonized major sections of the Rideau Canal and River. With the heavy traffic of recreational boats using the canal system, the chance for infestation is high. So far there have not been documented reports of zebra mussels in the tributaries flowing into the main Rideau River system. In the Mississippi Valley watershed, zebra mussels were first detected in Crotch, Dalhousie, and Sharbot Lakes in 1995. Further testing revealed zebra mussel veligers (larvae) in Kashwakamak Lake 1998 and adults are now found in Silver

and Mississippi Lake. This summer the **WATERSHED WATCH** program is testing Patterson Lake, Dalhousie Lake, Bennett Lake, Clear Lake, Sharbot Lake, White Lake, and Black Lake for zebra mussels in the Mississippi Valley Watershed. In the Rideau Valley Watershed, water quality is being monitored on Pike Lake, O'Brien Lake, Farren Lake, Big Crosby Lake, Little Crosby Lake, Davern Lake, Little Silver Lake, and Rainbow Lake. Results will be known later this fall.

Ease of access and number of users influence the likelihood of infestation by zebra mussels. Education and awareness is the greatest tool to slow the infestation rate. It is critical to take precautions in order to prevent the spread of zebra mussels.

- ▶ Post signs at all boat launches reminding boaters to take appropriate precautions.

- ▶ Consider making it easy for boaters to pressure wash their boats and trailers prior to launching.
- ▶ If you cannot pressure wash your boat with water at least 40 degrees Celsius, leave it on land to dry for five days.
- ▶ Drain water from the motor, live well, bilge, and transom well away from the water.
- ▶ Never empty your bait bucket into another body of water.
- ▶ Spread the word to residents around the lake and to resort and marina operators.

For more information on zebra mussels and other invasive species contact the Invading Species Hotline of the Ontario Federation of Anglers and Hunters at 1-800-563-7711 or visit their web site at <http://www.ofah.org>

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## Lake Steward Resource Kits

Clean water is the main reason people have cottages. Everyone wants the reassurance that the quality of their lake environment is being monitored in order to maintain and protect water quality. Stewardship is the answer and the best way to transform your concern into action is participating in the **WATERSHED WATCH** program. Mississippi Valley Conservation, with support from the Lanark County Stewardship Council, has developed Resource Kits for new Lake Stewards. Containing information and tools to help novice Lake Stewards initiate basic water quality testing, the kits are designed to “shorten the learning curve” of new Lake Stewards. The kits are made up of: *Take the Plunge — Stewardship of Ontario’s Waters* (a book published through the Federation of Ontario Cottagers’ Associations (FOCA) which serves as a basic guide to understanding and monitoring water quality), a Secchi disk, weighted composite sampler with measured line, glass bottle and stopper, sample bottles, thermometer, log book, marker, laminated contour map of your lake showing recommended sampling station location(s), and a Lake Stewards Blue Binder for data. Kits are available for a \$75 donation to help support the **WATERSHED WATCH** program. Call Mike Yee at (613) 259-2421 to order one for your lake association.

## Septic Systems

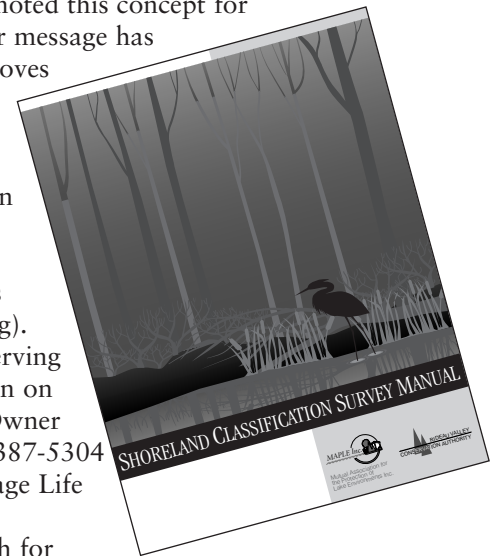
Is your septic system working properly? A malfunctioning septic system is the first step towards degraded lake quality. It may even threaten the health of your family through bacterial contamination of your drinking water. Ensure that your septic system is in good repair and have it inspected to make sure it is functioning properly. In addition, you may want to explore new alternatives to the traditional septic system. New systems using composting, incineration, and chemical technologies are becoming more popular. Consult *A Guide to Operating and Maintaining your Septic System* available from Mississippi Valley Conservation (613-259-2421) or the LandOwner Resource Centre (1-800-387-5304) for more information.

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## Naturalization

Many shoreline residents are learning the benefits of naturalizing their shorelines. The Mutual Association for the Protection of Lake Environments (**MAPLE**) has promoted this concept for approximately two decades. Their message has been that natural vegetation improves wildlife habitat, decreases shoreline erosion, and acts as a natural buffer between upland areas and the lake environment. In addition, native species are well adapted to their environmental conditions and will not require as much care (eg. fertilizers, watering).

For more information on preserving and/or restoring natural vegetation on your property, contact the LandOwner Resource Center (LRC) at 1-800-387-5304 or visit [www.lronline.com](http://www.lronline.com). Cottage Life also has information online at <http://www.cottagelife.com>. Watch for announcements about the new **MAPLE Shoreland Classification Survey Manual** — the how to book on shoreland naturalization — coming in mid-November.



▲ **MAPLE's Shoreland Classification Survey Manual** — another must read for the lake association library.

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## Guide to Eating Fish

For many anglers in the Mississippi and Rideau Valley watersheds, enjoying a delicious meal of fish is one of the highlights of their cottage experience. Wise fishermen often consult the 2001–2002 *Guide to Eating Ontario Sport Fish* first to see if the fish is safe to eat. The guide is available your local Beer Store or the Conservation Authorities.





## Ribbon of Life

The shoreline is the most sensitive and vital part of the entire lake ecosystem. It is known as the “Ribbon of Life” because 90% of lake plants and animals use it at one or more times in their life cycle. This area provides the majority of the food, shelter and space that fish and wildlife need to survive. To maintain these areas, proper planning is required to locate what we need to enjoy life at the lake. For a how-to guide, the Department of Fisheries and Oceans and the Federation of Ontario Cottagers’ Association, have produced *The Shoreline Primer* and *The Dock Primer* by calling 1-866-333-6676 or e-mail [referralsontario@dfo-mpo.gc.ca](mailto:referralsontario@dfo-mpo.gc.ca).



## Bear Facts

To find out how to live with bears, there is an enclosed fact sheet in this issue. For more information call Kemptville Ministry of Natural Resources at (613) 258-8204 or checkout the website: [www.mnr.gov.on.ca/MNR/bear](http://www.mnr.gov.on.ca/MNR/bear)

## LIVING BY WATER

The Living by Water Project concentrates on the role that waterfront residents can play in conserving their lands and adjoining waters, to protect waterfront habitat in the riparian, littoral and intertidal zones, and ensure a healthy future for wildlife and humans. The Living by Water Project is an action-oriented, strategically planned campaign and conservation pledge program to protect, enhance and restore shorelines. It offers a variety of services and products and a comprehensive public service announcement program. For more information visit the national website at

[www.livingbywater.ca](http://www.livingbywater.ca) or contact the Ontario Project via the LandOwner Resource Centre, phone: (613) 692-2390 or e-mail: [shorelines@lrconline.com](mailto:shorelines@lrconline.com).



THE ONTARIO TRILLIUM FOUNDATION  
LA FONDATION TRILLIUM DE L'ONTARIO



The Ontario Trillium Foundation is an agency of the Ministry of Citizenship, Culture and Recreation. With \$100 million in annual funding from the province’s charitable gaming initiative, the Foundation provides grants to eligible charitable and not-for-profit organizations in the arts, culture, sports, recreation, environment and social service sectors.

- ▶ Alliance of Rideau Lakes Associations
- ▶ Big Rideau Lake Association
- ▶ Farren Lake Property Owners Association
- ▶ Mississippi Valley Lake Stewardship Network
- ▶ Rideau Valley Conservation Foundation and its many donors
- ▶ Township of Bathurst Burgess Sherbrooke



Mississippi Valley  
Conservation



RIDEAU VALLEY  
CONSERVATION AUTHORITY