

# WATER QUALITY BEST PRACTICES

Courtesy of FOCA

Our Lake is our very best asset – let's keep it that way!

Despite good condition of our Lake, do not use lake water as drinking water unless you have installed a proper water treatment system, and you test its output on a regular basis.

Water quality is a top concern of our cottagers. In addition to monitoring the water, Tea Lake Property Owners Association is participating in water quality monitoring, through the Lake Partner and Lake Blitz programs.

The Lake Association has an ongoing commitment to inform cottagers of the best practices to maintain our good water quality.

## **MONITORING PROGRAMS**

Lake Partner Program (LPP) - this province-wide program is a partnership between FOCA and the Ontario Ministry of Environment and Climate Change. Sampling for our Lake is done by volunteers each year, with the samples sent back to the Dorset Environmental Science Lab for scientific analysis of Total Phosphorus, a key nutrient for algal growth. Additionally, volunteers take Secchi disk readings (water clarity tests) bimonthly from spring through fall in those same locations. All the data is published, here:

<https://www.ontario.ca/environment-and-energy/map-lake-partner>.

Lake Blitz is a national program monitoring the impact of climate change on freshwater lakes. From May to September, Lake Blitz volunteers across Canada are helping create a 'snapshot' of freshwater lakes by collecting temperature readings at their chosen lake and shoreline photos of their location and the colour of the water. All the data that's being collected will be added to the Lake Observation Map that can be viewed in real-time, here:

<https://livinglakescan.maps.arcgis.com/apps/instant/sidebar/index.html?appid=7e840c7135dc475bbe5fd91571e814c8>

Please speak with the Association if you are interested in becoming a Lake Partner volunteer!

## **BEST PRACTICES**

Maintaining good water quality, so that we may continue to enjoy the lake for swimming and water activities, is a community initiative and requires support from all cottagers and their guests. Below is a list of Dos & Don'ts that should assist cottagers in their efforts to preserve their lake water.

## **SHORELINE**

- **Don't** – use any chemical based fertilizers, pesticides or herbicides on your property.
- **Do** – maintain a natural shoreline. Naturally vegetated land with native grasses, shrubs and tree roots anchor the soil and prevent the shoreline from being washed away. These plants act like sponges, removing impurities found in rainwater runoff, such as soil, pet wastes, salt, pesticides, fertilizers, oil and grease, fuels, leaves, litter and septic output.
- **Do** – create pathways and walkways using a “softscape” such as wood, absorbent pea gravel or woodchips and a meandering or terraced path to delay the inevitable runoff.
- **Don't** – replace natural plants with grass. Manicured lawns, with their shallow roots, encourage erosion and allow as much as 55% of the unfiltered runoff to reach our lake.
- **Don't** – disturb the lake bottom. The area from the water's edge to where the sunlight no longer penetrates to the lake bottom acts as a home or food corridor to 90% of all the fish and aquatic wildlife species on the lake. By leaving logs, rocks and plant material in the water, good algae, spawning fish, ducks, loons, turtles and crayfish can live, hide and feed upon the billions of microorganisms that this “debris” provides.

Get more tips here: <https://foca.on.ca/shoreline-owners-guide-to-healthy-waterfronts/>.

## **WASTEWATER & SEPTIC SYSTEMS**

- **Do** - make sure your septic system is large enough to meet your needs. Look for ways to reduce the amount of wastewater that enters the septic system. Effluent from sump pumps and roof drains should not go into the septic system.
- **Do** - maintain non-woody plants on top of your leaching bed but don't allow trees and shrubs too close to the bed or tank. Some trees have roots that search a long way for water which can cause your leaching bed to become plugged.
- **Do** – watch what goes in your septic tank as it requires live bacteria to function properly. Many cleaners and household products will kill bacteria.
- **Don't** – ever put fats or oils, paints, gasoline or antifreeze, drain and toilet bowl cleaners, bleaches, feminine hygiene products, diapers, condoms, plastics, kitchen waste (coffee grounds, egg shells), cigarette filters into the septic system.
- **Don't** - allow machinery, ATV's or snowmobiles to cross the leaching bed. If snow is compacted, the leaching bed can freeze and the tank may overflow.
- **Don't** – ignore signs of a problem such as your system backing up, foul odours, effluent on the surface or soggy ground in the leaching bed, system freezing, toilet and drains gurgling or draining slowly. Have your septic system inspected regularly, and pumped out when necessary (when the main chamber is 1/3 full of solids).

Take 10 minutes, and **watch this video** about septic system maintenance, parts, signs of trouble: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5VeTGVnkYA4>



## **ADDITIONAL RESOURCES ABOUT WATER QUALITY**

- MOECC - <https://www.ontario.ca/ministry-environment-and-climate-change>
- Lake Partner Program <http://desc.ca/programs/lpp>
- Ontario Onsite Wastewater Association (OOWA) - [www.oowa.org](http://www.oowa.org)

Federation of Ontario Cottagers' Associations (FOCA) – <https://foca.on.ca/resources/> (you can search on this webpage by any keyword)