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Managing Shoreline Property to Protect Water Quality

Condensed from brochure WQ52 by Michigan State University Extension

“If you live on lake or stream property, you have a special responsibility to prevent pollutants from entering the water. In contrast to areas away from the water, activities you do on shoreline property are more likely to pollute the water. Because homes are often closer together and native plants and wetlands are replaced with lawns, pollutants coming from shoreline areas have less chance of being filtered before reaching the water.

Some common shoreline pollutants are lawn fertilizers; runoff from driveways, roofs, and walkways; lawn clippings and leaves (they contain phosphorus); soil from shoreline erosion; lawn and garden pesticides; oil and gas from boats; and septic system effluent.

Maintenance of a septic system on lakefront property requires more care and work than maintaining a similar system located in another place. Planting a buffer strip of deep rooted plants between the drainfield and the shoreline can help absorb some of the nutrients before they reach the water.

Proper yard and landscape care is especially important in shoreline areas. How you design and maintain the area can have a significant impact. Use phosphorus free fertilizer and be careful when applying it. Some pesticides can be harmful to aquatic life and contain warnings about application near lakes and streams. Read the label carefully.

Water running off your property after storms contains soil, nutrient, oil, chemicals, and other contaminants. To prevent runoff from polluting your lake, take special care to manage the water from your property and the water running through your property from other sources. Try to minimize the amount of impervious surfaces on your property and consider planting a dense area of wetland plants such as cattails or wetland grasses at places where runoff enters the lake. Install a rain barrel on your property to capture rooftop runoff that can be used for lawn and garden watering. This allows you to reuse water that would otherwise run off, so that it can naturally soak back into the ground. Excess runoff can be directed to a rain garden. Rain gardens are special water quality gardens that are expressly designed for areas where water habitually pools or where rainwater is deliberately channeled.

There are many brochures and booklets available at the Montmorency Conservation District to help you with the management of your waterfront property to keep your lake clean and beautiful. Some are complete with landscaping diagrams and lists of suggested plants.

To read the complete brochure go to:

<http://web2.msue.msu.edu/bulletins/Bulletin/PDF/WQ52.pdf>

Landscaping for Water Quality – booklet

http://www.michigan.gov/documents/deq/wb-nps-Landscaping-for-Water-Quality_250582_7.pdf

After the Storm – Brochure on rainwater runoff

http://www.michigan.gov/documents/deq/ess-nps-savvy-afterstorm_209381_7.pdf