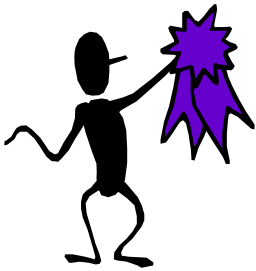


Pipe and North Pipe Lake
Nature Notes
Water... Land... Animals



20 Things YOU Can Do to Improve Water Quality

By Dick Hollar

The degradation of our lakes and streams has been an on-going process since their development circa 1950. No "one-fix" is going to be the magic trick to improve a lake, but a combination of several fixes will help abate pollution from entering the waterbody. Please take the time to evaluate your impact on the lake and what you can do to reduce the amount of nutrients or contaminants from entering the lake system and groundwater. Remember, the environment is a complex system of chains and food webs that interact and affect each other. Your footprint on one of the chains could harm the organisms at both ends.

Following is a list of Best Management Practices that have been identified for lakes, ponds, streams, and rivers. This list is not exhaustive, but includes easy things that you can do on your own property. Again, these practices in conjunction with wise stewardship will have the greatest influence on water quality.

1. Put erosion control practices in place during new construction or remodeling projects. This includes properly installed silt fences, mulch, erosion control blankets, and filter cloth. The County does sell some erosion control items such as blankets and filter cloth. The bottom line is to minimize the amount of time bare soil is exposed to the elements (wind and rain.)
2. Pick up pet waste.

3. Don't allow lawn clippings, raked leaves, and other organic matter to get into lake water.
4. If you harvest aquatic plants (in compliance with NR 109), use them as fertilizer for your garden or bring them further upland to keep from re-entering the water. When cleaning fire pits as well, be sure the ashes are not washed into the lake as they contain a high amount of phosphorus.
5. Reduce your consumption of goods - Industry in Wisconsin uses almost 600 million gallons of water per day! Reduce, reuse, recycle!!
6. Increase infiltration of rain on your property by leaving or establishing native vegetation (forest land and forest under story, native grasses, and native shrubs).
7. Leave aquatic plants in the littoral zone - including emergent, free-floating, and submergent plants. They reduce the impact of waves, help stabilize banks, and prevent erosion. Do not disturb them when boating.
8. Respect the slow-no-wake zones on lakes. Motorboats may not operate faster than slow-no-wake within 100 feet of a dock, raft, pier, or buoyed restricted area. Personal watercrafts may not operate within 200 feet of shore on any lake.
9. Obey the ban on phosphorus fertilizers within 1000 feet of a lake or 300 feet of a river. See <http://www.polkshore.com/>
10. Restore native vegetation along the shoreline. These buffers keep soil in place, filter out sediments from entering the water, reduce noise from the lake, provide habitat to wildlife, and uptake nutrients before entering the lake.
11. Storm water runoff is a problem in developed areas. Large volumes of water flow over lawns, picking up any sediments and contaminants it encounters, and carry them into lakes and streams. Rain barrels can be used to collect rooftop rainfall, strategically placed under rain spouts. This rainwater can be used at a later time to water gardens or lawn or wash the car. Rain gardens can also be established to increase infiltration of rain water into yards. Drain gutters and downspouts onto vegetated or gravel-filled seepage areas, not directly

onto paved surfaces. Splash blocks also help reduce erosion. Check out the following for more information:

http://www.gardeners.com/gardening/content.asp?copy_id=5497

<http://www.urbangardencenter.com>.

<http://clean-water.uwex.edu/pubs/raingarden/gardens.pdf>

<http://www.consciouschoice.com/environs/raingardens1405.html>

<http://www.news.wisc.edu/releases/view.html?id=7385>

12. Maintain septic systems.
13. Remind visitors of water and boating regulations and encourage friends and neighbors to act responsibly.
14. Ask the Town to properly fit road culverts and ditches to account for the amount of runoff. Keep road ditches free of debris and sediment.
15. Come up with goals and objectives for your lake and its watershed. Work toward implementing those goals.
16. Support long-term water quality monitoring. Long-term monitoring will help lake managers understand trends in water quality and detect any changes.
17. Address the amount of boat traffic on the lake. You may wish to limit the amount or type of activities to minimize sediment resuspension from the bottom of the lake.
18. New residents should be updated with the current water quality of the lake to give them a realistic understanding of the lake.
19. You may wish to limit development within the watershed to limit the impact on the lake.
20. Other tools are available to lake groups, such as technical engineering practices, management units (Protection and Rehabilitation Districts), and educational resources. Find more information at the Wisconsin Association of Lakes website - www.wisconsinlakes.org. Also peruse the DNR website and utilize county and state employees for technical guides and brochures. Get involved with your lake!