

Green Home and Cottage

*A quick reference guide
to 'green living' for shoreline
property owners*

Many New Brunswickers live along shorelines, both as residents and seasonal cottage dwellers. While there can be pleasure in owning or visiting shoreline property, the proximity to our Province's water sources also brings environmental responsibility.

This pamphlet is intended to be a quick reference guide to 'green living', touching on some of the key environmental and safety issues you should keep in mind. For more detailed information on these and other environmental subjects, see the last page for contact information.



Watercourse and Wetland Alterations

What might seem like a harmless project around your shoreline property may alter a watercourse or wetland and could have a negative impact on water quality, endanger aquatic life and cause property damage. Altering a watercourse or wetland involves affecting the flow of water, either temporarily or permanently. In addition, disturbing the ground or vegetation near a watercourse or wetland is also an alteration.

In an effort to protect watercourses and wetlands, the Department of Environment and Local Government requires that a Watercourse and Wetland Alteration Permit be obtained before you undertake certain activities within 30 metres of a watercourse or wetland. Such activities may include, but are not limited to, installing a culvert, constructing a bridge, dock or wharf, landscaping, removing vegetation, or operating heavy machinery. To see if your project requires a permit or for information on how to obtain a permit, contact the Department of Environment and Local Government (see last page).

Nutrients and Algae

Many shoreline dwellers enjoy waterfront scenery. However, when we disturb the natural environment through heavy digging, removal of plant life and/or construction on or near a shoreline, we are disturbing the structure of the soil and are reducing its stability. When the stability is lessened, the shoreline will begin to erode or wear away. This



erosion deposits sediment along with nutrients, such as phosphorus, into the water. Excess nutrients can come from fertilizer use, improperly functioning

septic systems and the use of household and personal care products that contain phosphate. Although

erosion and sedimentation are naturally occurring processes, we can prevent increased erosion by leaving a buffer of trees and vegetation along the shoreline. This buffer captures sediment and stores nutrients before they reach the water.

When an over abundance of nutrients, especially phosphorus and nitrogen, reaches a watercourse it can cause algae to grow and can potentially result in an algae bloom. This profusion of algae can lead to a reduction in the amount of oxygen and impact aquatic life in a waterway.

Landowners can help keep excess nutrients from entering the water by:

- not removing shoreline vegetation and promoting natural plant species;
- not using fertilizers or herbicides, especially near water;
- ensuring your septic tank and septic field are well maintained and located far from the shore; and
- using only phosphate free household and personal care products.

Water Wells

Given the location of many shoreline residences, domestic wells are common sources for drinking water. All wells must be installed by a licensed well contractor, and once properly installed, well owners should continue regular maintenance by checking to ensure that all visible parts are in place and that no cracks or corrosion exist. To reduce the risk of contamination, avoid using pesticides, fuels and other pollutants near the well. You may also have to chlorinate your well water periodically to reduce bacteria or other contaminants. It is also important to test your well water regularly. By law, all new and re-drilled wells must be tested



within 12 months of installation, but no matter how long you've had your well, it's wise to undertake annual testing. Water testing kits can be obtained from any office of the Department of Environment and Local Government or from many of the Service New Brunswick locations.

Septic Systems

An important part of enjoying life along a shoreline hinges on having a functioning and reliable septic system. This means ensuring proper installation and maintenance. An improperly installed or maintained septic system can cause serious health problems,



degrade the water quality in lakes and streams and be very expensive to repair. There are preventive steps you can take, such as having your septic tank

pumped out and your system inspected at least every 2-3 years, not driving or parking on your septic field, and not disposing of non-degradables such as grease and plastics, or poisons, such as gasoline, oil, paint, paint thinner or antifreeze, in your toilet.

Watch for tell-tale signs of a problem, like sewage back-ups, lush green growth over the disposal field, slow draining toilets or drains, or sewage odors. Only a licensed installer is permitted to install, construct, repair, or replace an on-site sewage disposal system and can only do so upon approval from the Department of Public Safety.

Integrated Pest Management

Pests and unwanted weeds are inevitable for shoreline dwellers. Consider Integrated Pest Management (IPM), a method for managing insects and unwanted weeds with reduced impact to both you and your environment.

First, identify and learn about the various pests that

inhabit your property. It may surprise you to know that some insects are beneficial, natural predators that feed on other



pests, so it's important to distinguish "friend" from "foe"! Then consider implementing IPM practices such as removing hospitable environments for unwanted pests and luring predatory bugs to naturally handle pests. The same goes for unwanted weeds. IPM practices encourage non chemical control such as picking weeds by hand, aerating, and mowing your lawn to the proper height. Remember, pesticides don't have to be your first choice, but follow label instructions and exercise caution in the event that you do use them.

Petroleum Product Safety

Owning an oil tank has particular significance for those who reside along a shoreline. You can help protect yourself, your property, and its surrounding waterways by carrying out regular inspections of your tank and its protective covering to look for signs of corrosion or damage.

You can avoid gas tank overflows by refraining from topping-up the tank of any gas-powered equipment or recreational vehicle, and always use a funnel to avoid spills during refuelling. In addition, keep fuel away from drains, waterways, and wells. Never discard petroleum products in a sink, drain, waterway, or on the ground.

In the event of a small petroleum spill, and only if safe to do so, try collecting the spill by using a bucket or pan, or contain it by surrounding the spill with a mound of sand or earth to limit spreading. Use absorbent materials like kitty litter, sand or earth to soak up the spill. Once the petroleum is contained, the Department of Environment and Local Government can advise you on how to dispose of the contaminated materials.

More Information

We hope this reference guide is a helpful starting place for increasing your awareness and action in maintaining a healthy shoreline environment.

For detailed information, please contact the Department of Environment and Local Government:

Department of Environment
and Local Government
P.O. Box 6000
Fredericton, NB E3B 5H1
Canada
Tel: (506) 453-2690
Email: elg/egl-info@gnb.ca

www.gnb.ca/environment

Regional Office Contacts:

Bathurst	(506) 547-2092
Fredericton	(506) 444-5149
Grand Falls	(506) 473-7744
Miramichi	(506) 778-6032
Moncton	(506) 856-2374
Saint John	(506) 658-2558

For information on septic systems you may also contact the Technical Inspection Services Head Office of the Department of Public Safety, Tel: 1-844-249-6533.

