

Protecting Our Lakes: The Virtues of Prevention

Your mom kept telling you that avoiding a mess in your room was easier than cleaning it up. She was right.

Doctors will tell you it's better (and much cheaper) to stop smoking than to cure the problems smoking causes. They're right.

And when your lake association president says it's better to keep pollution out of the water than to try and get rid of it – well, he or she is right, too. Consider these facts when planning to build or landscape on your lakefront property:

- **While rivers can ‘cleanse themselves’ if we stop adding pollutants, lakes will recycle the pollutants in a continuous downward spiral of reduced water quality.**
- **Most lake problems result from small amounts of pollution adding up over time. It is a one-way street that can't be easily reversed – and the problems often aren't noticed until it's too late.**
- **More than 50 years' experience shows that pollution prevention is much cheaper than cleanup – no economist could justify waiting until signs of poor water quality appear.**
- **Preventive practices cost next to nothing, yet can greatly improve fish and wildlife habitat, reduce erosion, and increase biological diversity. A simple prevention practice is to leave an unmowed buffer strip along your shoreline. This natural pollution reduction also looks beautiful and needs little or no maintenance.**
- **Preventive practices can be a one-shot deal. Cleanups often require a great deal of time and money – and their benefits may be only temporary.**

As you make plans for your lake property, think like an economist. Or your doctor. Or your mom. Put prevention first. The rewards can be incredible. You can't put a price on water quality.

“An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure.”
–**Benjamin Franklin**

One in a series of articles sponsored by the Oneida County Lakes and Rivers Association (www.oclra.org). For more information, contact Bob Martini at 715-282-5896 or email to webmaster@oclra.org. OCLRA encourages the use and distribution of this material by lake associations, their members, and other parties concerned about water quality.

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