

Caring for Our Lakes

You may have heard that Lower & Middle Bolton Lakes are currently suffering with dangerous algae and bacterial growth. This growth is preventing many of us from using the lakes safely. Unfortunately, our lakes suffer when we don't care for them (and the streams and waterways that feed them) properly. Fortunately, there are solutions, and **WE** are an important part of those solutions! Proper care includes managing our yards, landscaping, animals, and the land that is included in our watershed. As such, FBL would like to share important information with you so that each of us can continuously help to improve the quality of our lakes.

As a resident of the Bolton Lakes Region and its watershed you are a valued constituent and are on the front-line for helping to protect our lakes. You have the ability to control land use, runoff, toxic materials, and water quality, and to preserve shoreline structures. You are a stakeholder and are very much needed to help protect the lakes.

Remember...

The quality of our lakes and streams is ultimately a reflection of how we take care of our land. Waterfront property owners, inland residents, recreational users, agricultural producers and other businesses can all play a positive role in maintaining and improving the water quality of our lakes and streams. Healthy watersheds make healthy lakes and bring higher property values.

A list of resources is maintained on the Friends of Bolton Lakes website. Highlights from this resource are listed below.

Gravity (think sloped yards): Gravity can move most substances that are applied to the land directly into our lakes and streams. If it is applied on the land, it will eventually end up in the water.

Sewer System: Many residents in proximity to the lakes have been connected to the sewer system, which has eliminated a good deal of household waste from entering the lakes and streams. This helps the health of our lakes and streams but is not the only factor important to protecting them. Problems can and do occur with the sewer systems. If you have any issues with your sewer system, please address them as soon as they occur.

Septic System: If you are connected to a septic system, please have this system inspected and maintained regularly.

Hazardous Waste: Hazardous wastes need to be properly disposed of. Check with your town as to dates and locations for drop off of hazardous waste and please, never dispose of hazardous waste on your property or in our drainage grates. This is illegal. [Here](#) is a link to the Connecticut DEEP (Department of Energy and Environmental Protection) website on hazardous waste.

Fertilizer & Pesticides: What makes your lawn green also makes the lakes green. Curb and/or eliminate these pollutants at their source – reduce all fertilizers, especially phosphorus. Fertilizer promotes the rapid growth of weeds and algae and decreases water clarity, often turning lakes green. Decaying algae also depletes oxygen in the water, so that fish can no longer thrive.

Reduce Runoff – Cut the amount of runoff that picks up pollutants and carries them to the lakes and streams by minimizing the number of hard surfaces (e.g., driveways, patios) on your property.

Capture and Cleanse – Capture and cleanse pollutants carrying runoff before they reach the lakes and streams with shore land buffers, rain barrels or rain gardens. When you're planning a construction project, refer to "Caring for our Lakes", a free booklet developed by Connecticut DEEP available [here](#).

Rain Gardens - Build a rain garden to absorb runoff from downspouts. [Here](#) is a site that provides easy-to-follow instructions to designing, planting and maintaining a rain garden. Rain gardens are just what they sound like – areas that soak up rainwater during wet times and serve as a beautiful garden all the time. They are landscaped areas planted with wildflowers and other native vegetation to replace areas of lawn. The gardens fill with a few inches of water and allow the water to slowly filter into the ground. The plants in the rain garden act as filters for the rainwater, helping to slow the runoff and allowing it to soak into the ground rather than flowing out into storm drains or ditches to lakes. Rain gardens also provide wildlife habitat for birds, butterflies and dragonflies and are an aesthetically pleasing addition to any property.

Please consider how you and your family might be able to do at least one thing differently to reduce negative impacts to the lakes and streams. The power to improve our lake situation is in our hands. Thank you for your participation and please share this information with your friends and neighbors.