

# Have you hugged your Lake Steward lately?

Do you have fond memories of playing by the shore of your lake, looking for tadpoles, minnows and frogs? Do you love the plaintive call of the loon? Do you adore swimming in a clean, clear lake where the water looks, tastes and smells pure? It is no exaggeration to say that all of that is threatened!

The lakes of Haliburton County are under stress like never before. Just some of the threats and results are invasive species, declining calcium levels, increasing phosphorous and nitrogen in the lake, fewer desirable fish species, declining frog and other amphibian populations and exponential development pressures.

If we want to protect our lake so that our children and grandchildren can enjoy the things we did, someone has to take the lead and we all have to help.

At this time of stress who is protecting our lake? Government organizations are cutting back. Organizations like the Ministry of the Environment and the Ministry of Natural Resources do not have the staff to lead the fight on our lakes. So who is stepping up? Your Lake Steward is!

## **What the heck is a Lake Steward?**

Your Lake Steward is the volunteer within your lake association who takes the lead role in learning how to protect your lake and sharing that knowledge with you so that you can help - because without your help their effort will fail!

**The need for Lake Stewardship** has never been more important or more urgent. Many of us have the belief that the small things we do or don't do will have minimal impact on this "big lake". We could not be more wrong. We thought that Lake Simcoe was too big to have problems - *the system will just restore itself*. Lake trout have stopped reproducing in Lake Simcoe. Lake Simcoe is now so polluted with phosphorous and nitrogen that the entire aquatic ecosystem may crash. The Ontario Government, in partnership with many other organizations, has launched a major project to try to save Lake Simcoe. This effort will cost millions of dollars and is not guaranteed to succeed. All life depends on water.

## **How can I help my Lake Steward protect our lake for myself, my children and grandchildren?**

Did you know that even a well maintained septic system still leaches some nutrients and contaminants into our lakes? Every year we add more septic systems to our lakes and not all are well maintained. A brand new system can fail if products such as bleach, antibacterial soaps, and dishwasher rinse aids etc. are flushed down the drain. Did you know that a few simple steps can prevent your system from polluting your lake?

Did you realize that natural shorelines function like your kidneys -filtering out toxins and some harmful nutrients before they can pollute your lake?

## **So what can you do?**

1. Find out from your lake association who your Lake Steward is.
2. Ask how you can make sure that your septic system is not polluting your lake and how you can re naturalize your shoreline - your steward has some simple low or no cost solutions for you
3. Finally at your association's annual meeting next summer -**Give your Lake Steward a hug!**

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