

A GUIDE TO

Sustainable Living in Algoma



WE PASS THIS WAY BUT ONCE

A Publication of the Central Algoma Freshwater Coalition

A Message from the Central Algoma Freshwater Coalition



We pass this way but once. With this outlook, Algoma residents will realize the need to minimize our environmental footprint and contribute to a collective effort to protect our beautiful mix of farms, forests, rivers and lakes—for now and the future. Our unique landscape is a stronghold of biodiversity, with communities of animals and plants that include species at risk. As residents of this great circle of life, we have much to be proud of. We have only now to understand and fulfill our evolving role in Algoma's community of living things.

But Algoma isn't immune to the threats that have compromised the environment elsewhere. Invasive species, climate change, algal blooms, and extreme weather events are all taking their toll and challenging environmental, economic and social values, now and for generations to come. These challenges are a new normal and require flexible responses that adhere to sustainable principles.

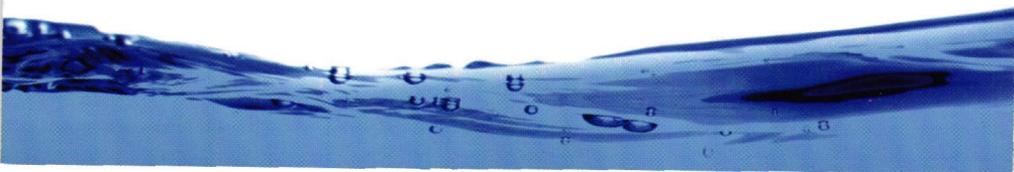
Our future is inseparable from the health of our watersheds. In protecting water quality, you also safeguard your investment in your property and your community. Taking responsibility for your own piece of Algoma—and enjoying the benefits of improved water quality, reduced erosion and greater plant and animal diversity—will contribute to a positive societal shift.

We hope this guide will inspire you with ideas to protect Algoma's water and ultimately contribute to a greater good!

Sincerely,

Chuck

Chuck Miller
President, Central Algoma Freshwater Coalition



Water is A Shared Responsibility

A watershed is an area drained by a network of waterways flowing to a common outlet

Regardless of where you live, you share a watershed with other people, plants and animals, all reliant on local habitats the same way you are. Your actions impact a broad community, human and otherwise. You are one of many and your actions invariably impact a broad community of living things.

Explore, understand and respect the timeless, natural processes that maintain water quality and biodiversity. Any action on the land affects the water quality downstream. Strive to live within the limits of the ecosystem.



We'll all benefit from the results:

- Reduced chemical contaminants
- Decreased nutrients and algal blooms
- Diverse natural habitats and native species
- Reduced occurrences of invasive species
- Greater resiliency to the impacts of climate change



To learn more, visit lakehuroncommunityaction.ca/get-involved

Between Land & Water

Just as humans are drawn to the beauty and recreational opportunities of shorelines, these “living edges” are also diverse natural habitats

Lakeshores and the banks of creeks and rivers form a natural transition between land and water. Known as “riparian zones,” these areas include living and non-living components—plants, rocks and woody debris.

Healthy waterfronts include amphibians like frogs and toads, snakes, fish, songbirds, waterfowl, and mammals such as beaver and muskrats, as well as aquatic and terrestrial vegetation like sedges, cattails, dogwoods and willows.

The biggest thing you can do to enhance your shoreline is to preserve or restore a buffer of native vegetation along the water’s edge, the wider the better. Ultimately, a natural waterfront protects your farm or cottage property from erosion, enhances wildlife and maintains water quality.



Keep It Natural

Create a shoreline buffer around lakes, rivers and creeks to protect water quality

Put the lawnmower away! Over time, native grasses, wildflowers and shrubs will replace monoculture lawns. This diverse flora is also less attractive to nuisance wildlife like Canada geese

Effective buffers extend a **minimum of 10 metres** (33 feet) from the water's edge

Moist soil is far more prone to compaction, which in turn increases erosion. Keep trails and livestock paths to a minimum to preserve natural shorelines around lakes, rivers and streams

Use barriers like fences or vegetation to keep **cattle out of waterways**



Trees—living and dead—provide food and shelter for wildlife. Trees also create cool and shady microclimates, reduce aquatic weeds and protect your property from erosion. Do not remove more than 10% of the trees in your shoreline area

Restore or enhance the buffer around lakeshores and waterways by planting non-invasive vegetation, such as willows, dogwoods, black ash and silver maple. Verify your selections at northernontarioflora.ca

Trees, fallen logs, rocks, and underwater vegetation are **habitat building blocks**, keys to a healthy riparian zone



Careful Construction

Carefully located, well-designed shoreline structures minimally impact the environment

Docks, other structures, and all work in the water may require construction permits from your local township or municipality, the Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry and Fisheries and Oceans Canada. Ignoring regulations could result in fines.

It is always best to minimize shoreline structures. Any project near or in the water should be designed to conserve shoreline aquatic habitat, including woody debris and weed beds.

The following are best practices for shoreline structures:



Floating docks are easy to install and maintain and require minimal permitting

Docks can be used as a bridge to access deep-water areas for swimming and boating

Avoid **clearing vegetation** or building or expanding beach areas

Select **untreated wood or synthetic** building materials

Avoid dredging, draining or filling waterfront areas and wetlands

Construct buildings like saunas beyond the shoreline buffer





Rain barrel

Water Works

Water has the ability to shape and alter the landscape like few other natural forces

The more we compact and pave the earth's surface, the more fine sediments and contaminants will wash into waterways, destroying fish habitat and causing pollution. Eroded soils often contain high levels of nutrients, which contribute to algal blooms. On the other hand, wetlands and undisturbed shoreline areas act



Monarch on Joe-pye-weed

like natural sponges, sopping up rainfall and runoff, nourishing the environment in times of drought, and keeping erosion in check.

Minimize hard surfaces: Non-porous asphalt and concrete driveways and paths are unable to absorb water

Maintain existing forest on rural properties and **plant trees in unused farm fields** to significantly reduce water contamination

Quick-growing willow and red-osier dogwood stakes will **stabilize soil in areas where erosion is common**, such as hillsides and gullies

On slopes, maintain vegetation and ensure **pathways are curved** to restrict the movement of water

Use **barriers** to prevent cattle and vehicles from degrading streambanks

Water-loving plants like Joe-pye-weed, Jack-in-the-pulpit and ferns capture stormwater naturally in low-lying areas. These **plants** attract pollinators like bees and butterflies

Do not alter natural waterways: Modifying streams can increase the risk of flooding and erosion

Downspout **rain barrels** reduce surges of surface water