



“All of us...doing our part” against Mother Nature!



As many of you are aware, Mother Nature got the upper hand on our lake this year. After ten years of solid progress, I know many of you felt we lost ground this year to both weeds and algae. This disruption is due in large part to two major “rain events” earlier in the year that flushed a large amount of nutrients, sediment, and most unfortunately for our neighbors in Camp Run – sewage into the lake. There is nothing we can do to stop Mother Nature when she decides to have a “100 year” event, but there are things ‘all of us’ can do to mitigate the impact. It would be nice to think we don’t have to worry for another 100 years, but if you look at the lake level graph on Conesuslake.org you will note a disturbing trend of more frequent and higher intensity events over the last four years.

Before we discuss what we can do, a little grounding. Rain events are significant for several reasons: 1) The carrying capacity of water for sediment and heavier materials such as vegetation, trash and even rocks increases exponentially with the increase in flow rate. This means that items that may have been in ditches and streams for months undisturbed will be flushed into the lake with a heavy rain. 2) The absorption rate of the land can easily be overloaded by heavy rains, again meaning that sediment and nutrients that may have remained on a lawn and been absorbed over time will now be flushed into the lake via ditches and streams. 3) Sanitary sewers (as opposed to storm sewers) are designed to handle waste water regardless of weather conditions, IF no additional rain water is introduced. However; according to the Livingston County Water Authority, this year a significant volume of rain water was introduced into sanitary sewer lines through illegal connections creating a major release of waste water across Camp Run and into the lake.

So what are the best practices that “all of us” can do to help “do our part”?

- Maintain a healthy lawn to increase the absorption capability of your property
- Use No-P fertilizer sparingly and at appropriate times (check the weather first) to ensure complete absorption
- Create berms or ‘rain gardens’ on your property to contain / or slow the flow of rainwater
- Create vegetative barriers on your property adjacent to the lake or streams (as appropriate) to increase ground absorption
- Plant grass or vegetation on any bare ground to prevent erosion and increase absorption
- Consider the use of rain barrels to capture excess run off for future use
- If your gutters are not terminating in rain barrels, utilize dry wells or route them away from the lake and into low areas or perforated pipe. DO NOT route your gutter flow directly into a nearby ditch, as there will be no opportunity for absorption
- Sump pump output should be handled in a similar manner to gutters
- Consider replacing concrete and blacktop with pervious surfaces (pavers, gravel, sand and brick) to enable more ground absorption



- Clean neighboring streams and ditches of trash as well as branches or brush that could be swept downstream into the lake (or worse into a culvert causing blockage)
- Clean up after your pet immediately

I am sure there are other best practices, I have overlooked; but if you follow the rule of keeping the watershed clean, healthy and absorbent we have a better chance of protecting our lake against Mother Nature.

Now, back to the topic of sewerage overflow that occurred this year. The Livingston County Water Authority is convinced that illegal connections of clean water sources (gutters, sump pumps, floor drains and other storm water connections) into the sanitary sewer during the storm events overwhelmed their carrying capacity and caused raw sewage to overflow Camp Run and contribute a significant amount of nutrients (and to a lesser extent e-coli) to flow into Conesus Lake. Estimates are that approximately 5% (200-250 homes) within the Water Authority have illegal connections. If you are aware of an illegal connection on your property, please rectify it immediately. Not only do these connections contaminate our lake and our neighbor's property, they can have serious financial implications for all of us around the lake. Illegal connections can be fined up to \$300 a day once discovered and could lead to a significant increase in your water bill. Additionally, if efforts to eliminate these connections through appeal and inspection do not resolve this issue, the Livingston County Water Authority will be forced to spend several million dollars (which equates to several thousand dollars for each user) to create containment ponds or other overflow control mechanisms. Inspections (for illegal connections as well as other more natural sources of leaks) will be starting very soon throughout the water authority. Please inspect your plumbing to ensure compliance.

Many of us have moved into our homes long after they were plumbed (or cobbled together in some cases) so what can you look for?

Sump pumps – Any sump pump that cannot easily be traced outside (through either visual inspection of the line or through noticeable ejection of water or soggy ground while it is working) is a possible illegal connection. The attached picture shows one way a sump pump has been directly and illegally connected into the sewer line inside the house.



Gutters – Any gutter that pipes into the ground as shown in the attached picture (as opposed to ejecting on the ground surface) is a possible illegal connection. Gutters piped into the ground could potentially be draining into dry wells (which will eventually overflow with enough rain), into perforated pipes (which may indicate as soggy soil), into the ditch (please don't do this) or is an illegal connection. I have been told that you cannot use the presence or absence of "sewer gas" as an indicator. Running a hose into your gutter may provide you with the answer as to where it terminates.



Smoke – If you notice smoke coming out of your gutters or floor drains you have just been identified as an illegal connection by LCWA, and you probably will wish you had checked for yourself before!

Again, we cannot fight the whims of Mother Nature but “all of us...can...do our part” through use of relevant best practices to ensure these major rain events do not overwhelm the significant progress we have made in protecting our lake. Thank you in advance for your support in these efforts.

