

Know Your Drinking Water!

What are the benefits of conserving water?

A Healthier Environment

The more water you use, the more energy it takes to treat, deliver and heat your water. Energy is also required to treat your wastewater so it can be safely put back into the environment. Most electricity produced in Ontario comes with an environmental cost such as pollution, which means the more water you use, the more stress you are putting on the environment.

If a water source runs low or dry, communities are forced to find new sources of drinking water. The result can be drilling more wells, withdrawing more water from natural water bodies, seeking new sources of water, or creating dams and reservoirs. Solutions such as these can stress the environment by altering natural ecosystems, draining aquifers, and draining or altering wetlands which help supply and replenish our water.

A Healthier Bank Account

Not only will your water bill go down if you conserve water, but your gas or electricity bill will also decline because you are heating less water. Even if your water comes from a private well, it costs money to pump water to your tap, so you too will save. In addition, the more water you use in your home, the greater the burden on your septic system, which also costs money to upgrade or replace.

A Healthier Community

By conserving water, you ease the burden on your community's drinking and wastewater treatment plants - the less water you use and send down the drain, the less work these plants have to do to make your water clean again.

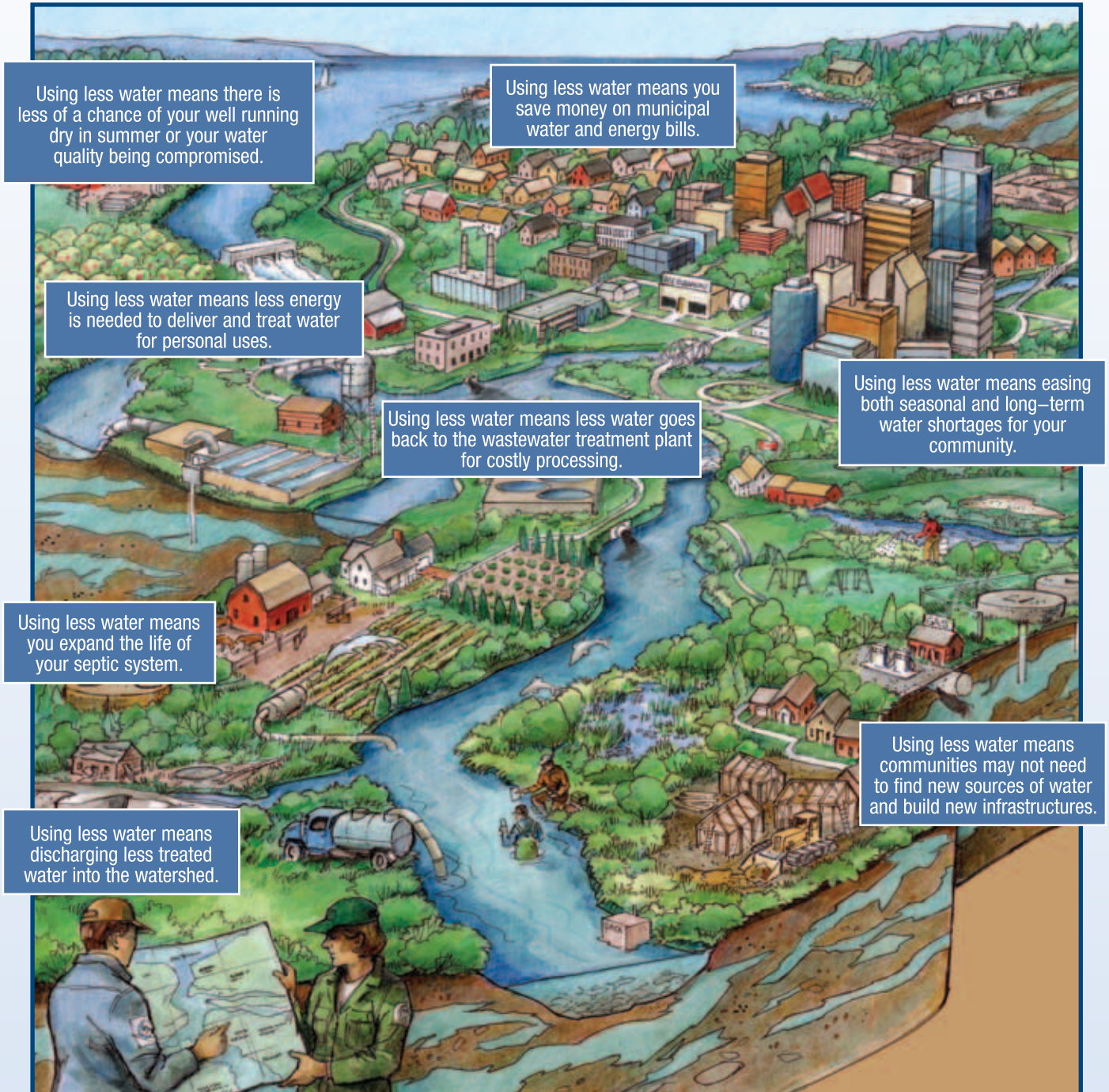
A Healthier Future

In some areas of Ontario, we use water faster than it can be naturally replenished, which can lead to long-term water shortages. However, smart water use stretches our water resources, helping avoid seasonal and long-term shortages, and saving thousands of litres of water per person each year!



Conserving water keeps your watershed healthy

A watershed is an area of land that is drained by a river or stream into a particular body of water such as a pond, lake or ocean. Think about your local creek, river or stream. Where does it start? What types of landscapes does it pass through and where does it end up? All of the area covered is a watershed.



A watershed is made up of a unique mixture of habitats that influence each other. These habitats include forests, creeks, rivers and lakes, farms and even cities or towns. Watersheds come in all sizes – large and small.

What you do upstream affects the quality and quantity of water downstream. Your lifestyle choices have a significant impact on our water sources so it is up to each of us to protect and conserve water.

There are many myths about our drinking water!

Myth: We have lots of water in Ontario, so there's nothing to worry about.

FACT: Because we are surrounded by water we tend to think there is an unlimited supply. In reality, there isn't. All of the water we have, and will ever have, is in constant motion, moving around the planet as it changes from solid to liquid to vapour. When we take water faster than it can be replenished, we face shortages and sometimes even water-use bans. Pressures on our water supplies include drought, contamination, and the demands of a growing population.

Myth: Water is a natural resource so it should be free.

FACT: Water is free. But it costs a lot to pump, deliver, store, treat, and remove drinking and wastewater for the almost nine million Ontario residents who rely on municipal water systems. Ontarians who use municipal water pay monthly fees for this service, but studies have shown that this is not enough to cover the cost of operating, repairing, and upgrading/expanding drinking or wastewater treatment systems for growing populations.

Myth: Ontarians are already careful about conserving water.

FACT: Most of us aren't fully aware of how much water we actually use or how we can make better use of it. We can easily cut our water use in half by making simple changes such as repairing leaky faucets, retrofitting toilets and showerheads, using efficient appliances, washing our cars and watering our lawns less often, and washing only full loads of laundry and dishes. Most of us won't even notice the difference, but our water systems will.

Myth: Our water is treated, so we don't need to worry about the health of drinking water sources.

FACT: It is very important to protect our drinking water at the source. Water treatment systems do not remove all contaminants from water, especially chemicals. Also, more than two million Ontarians do not have access to municipal water and draw their drinking water directly from untreated groundwater sources. Sometimes contamination problems develop that are impossible to correct, causing water supply sources to be shut down. Water treatment is only one method of protecting drinking water- other methods include preventing contamination of source water, using adequate distribution systems, testing water, and properly training water managers.

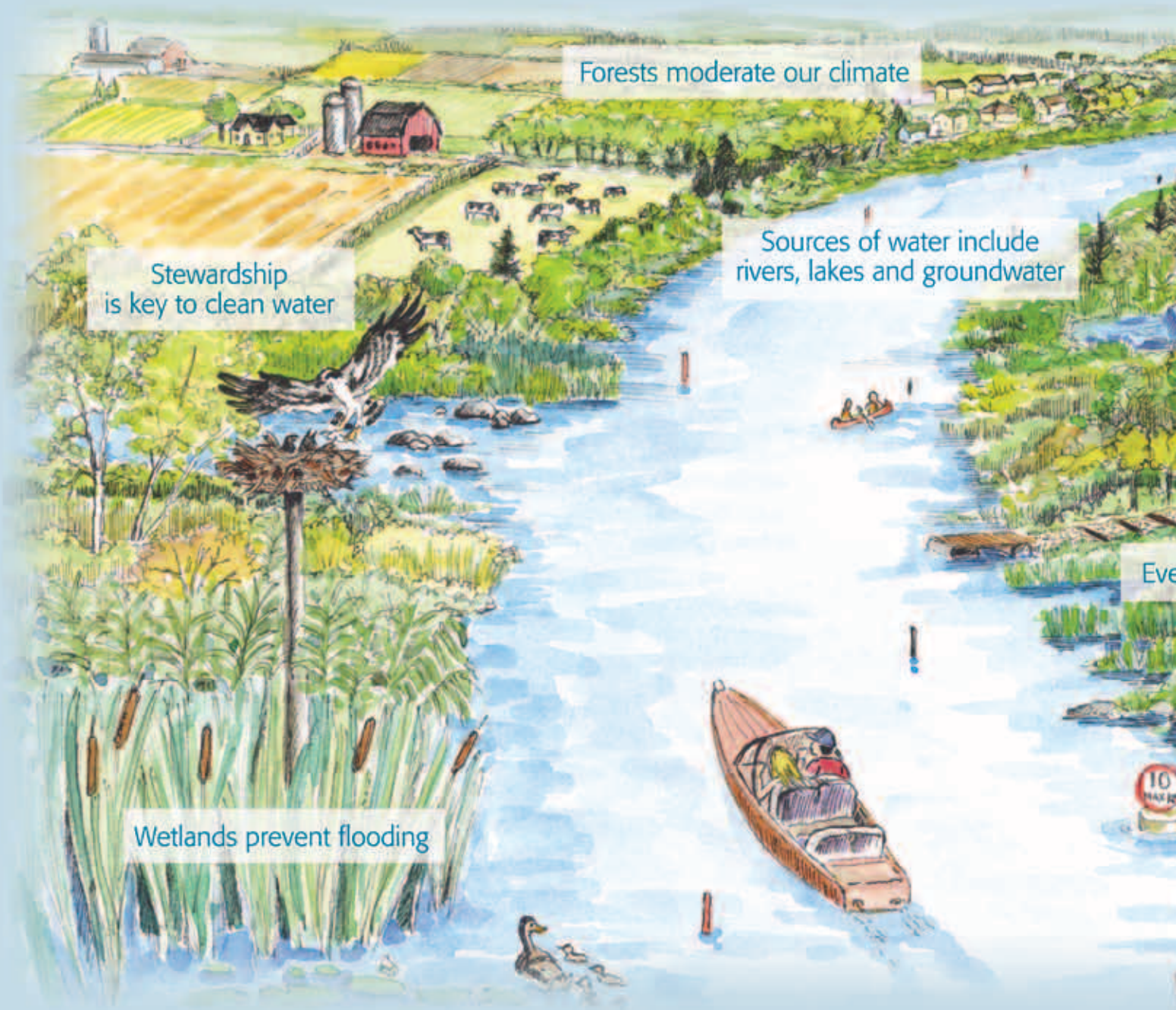
Photo Credit: Lou Wise



We are all responsible for the health of our water

In the Home

- Products such as bleach, cleaning products, old medicine, and electronics should not be put down the drain or in the garbage. Take your hazardous waste to your municipality's household hazardous waste collection events.
- Conserve water every day by limiting your daily activities. When brushing your teeth turn the tap off, limit showers to ten minutes, and install water saving devices.
- Using environmentally friendly cleaning products will help minimize damage to the environment. You can make your own with common household items such as baking soda, lemon, and vinegar.



Stewardship
is key to clean water

Forests moderate our climate

Sources of water include
rivers, lakes and groundwater

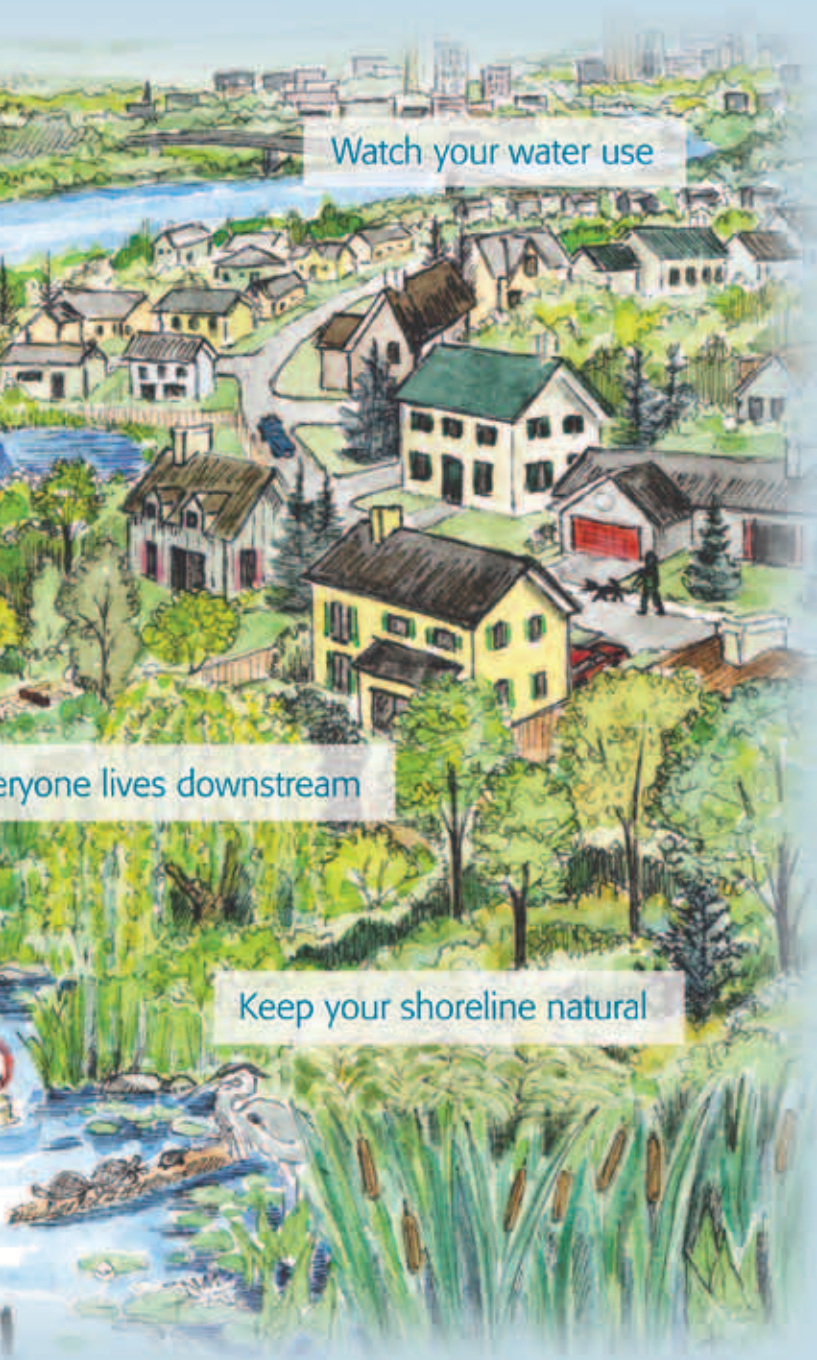
Wetlands prevent flooding

Even

10
MAY

In the Yard

- Fertilize your lawn lightly or not at all, especially if you live close to the water. Nitrates, which are found in fertilizer, can make their way into drinking water sources causing excessive algae or weeds and health problems for humans.
- Use native plant species in your lawn and garden, they are more resistant to insects and don't need a lot of water.



- Catch rain water from your eavestrough downspout in a rain barrel and use it to water your lawn and garden.
- Use the car wash or wash your car on your lawn using biodegradable soap (or no soap) instead of washing it in the driveway. Cleaning your car in the driveway can cause soaps, dirt, and oil to run down storm drains or into local streams.

On the Land

- If you own a shoreline property, leave vegetation along the shoreline to protect banks against erosion and ice damage. Shoreline vegetation is also great habitat for many species of fish and other aquatic creatures.
- Plant vegetation, such as grasses or shrubs, which help filter possible hazardous materials that could be making their way from your lawn into your drinking water.
- Regularly maintain your septic system. Conserving water and not disposing hazardous products into your septic system will help to keep the tank healthy and protect our water.

On the Water

- Watch your wake when boating! A large wake can easily damage the river or lake bed, disturb habitat, and wash away the shoreline.
- Carefully fuel your boat using proper containers and equipment. One drop of gasoline can contaminate up to 25 L of water.
- Do not dump sewage from your boat into the water.
- Clean the bottom of your boat to help avoid transporting invasive species (such as zebra mussels) from one lake to another.
- When swimming, avoid using soap or shampoo in the water. These products can contain nitrates and other contaminants.

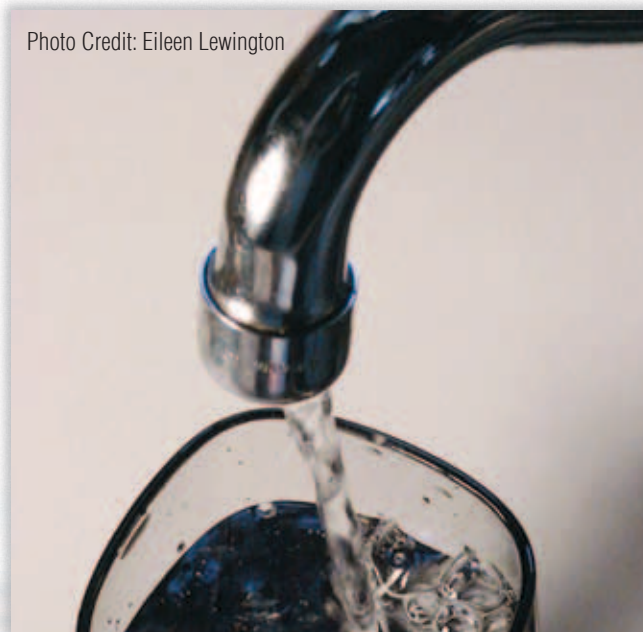
Source Water Protection

Ontario's drinking water comes from lakes, rivers, streams, or groundwater sources.

Water is our life-source. Protecting our sources of drinking water from overuse and contamination can help protect our health and the environment.

There are many activities that, if not properly managed, pose potential threats to the health of our drinking water. The Drinking Water Source Protection Program works to mitigate potential threats by managing activities that could impact the health of our water.

Photo Credit: Eileen Lewington



For more information about your drinking water
Please contact your local Source Protection Region or Area:



120 Bayview Parkway, Box 11,
Newmarket, ON L3Y 4W3
Tel. 905.895.0716
Fax. 905.895.0751
info@conservationontario.ca



For more information on the Source Water Protection Program, please visit Conservation Ontario's website:

www.conservationontario.ca

This project has received funding support from the Ontario government.
Such support does not indicate endorsement by the government of the contents of the material.