

**Mississippi Valley Conservation**

*State of the Lake  
Environment Report  
2006*

*Clear Lake*



## **“THE RIBBON OF LIFE”**

### **Where the Land Meets the Water**

Water quality is affected by many things: erosion and runoff from clearing of shorelines, the use of artificial fertilizers and leachate from sewage disposal systems resulting in too many nutrients reaching the lake. Phosphorus is the key nutrient of concern, too many nutrients can cause weed and algae growth and threatens fish habitat by reducing oxygen levels.

The shallow waters and first 10 metres of shore land form a "Ribbon of Life" around our lakes. This ribbon - where the land meets the water - is where much of the lake life is born, raised and fed. Many landowners, unaware of the importance of this area, have cleared the shorelines of native vegetation and replaced it with lawns, non-native ornamental vegetation, retaining walls and boathouses. This has had a negative affect on fish and wildlife habitat and water quality. Natural vegetation retained or restored along the shoreline helps prevent erosion and improves water quality by binding nutrients before they can enter the lake.

Mississippi Valley Conservation has long recognized the recreational and aesthetic value of lakes within the watershed and is committed to maintaining and protecting water quality and fish habitat. Mississippi Valley Conservation has joined together with volunteer Lake Stewards throughout the watershed to take steps to protect and restore water quality by launching the *Watershed Watch* program in 1998. *Watershed Watch* is an environmental monitoring and awareness program. The objectives of the program are to collect reliable environmental data to document current water quality conditions and use the data as an essential educational tool to encourage residents to adopt sound stewardship practices aimed at preserving and protecting water quality. Together we will encourage and assist shoreline residents, both seasonal and permanent, to become personal stewards of their lake by taking an active role in restoring and enhancing their shoreline to maintain water quality and a healthy lake environment.

Recreational water quality is generally expressed in terms of how clear the water appears. Water clarity is influenced by the amount of phytoplankton or microscopic algae present in the water; **chlorophyll a** is the green pigment in the phytoplankton. Water clarity is measured with a **Secchi Disc**, a 20 cm black and white disk attached to a measured line and lowered into the lake until it is no longer visible. The amount of nutrients entering the lake, in particular **phosphorus**, influences the amount of algae growing in the lake. Water clarity decreases with elevated concentrations of algae and therefore Secchi disc values are less. After the spring warming period there is a continuous supply of algae in the surface waters of the lake to the deep water areas where it decomposes and uses up the natural supply of oxygen. In severe circumstances this may eliminate habitat for fish species which require the cold, deep water portions to survive. Through *Watershed Watch* forty-two base lakes in the watershed will be monitored for these key water quality indicators; **total phosphorus, chlorophyll a, dissolved oxygen and temperature profiles and water clarity.**

# CLEAR LAKE

Clear Lake is a warm water lake located in the amalgamated Township of Bathurst Burgess Sherbrooke. At last count in 2006, there were approximately 24 seasonal residents and 7 vacant lots on the lake.

## Clear Lake Facts

**Elevation:** 180m. above sea level

**Perimeter:** 2.8 kilometres

**Deepest Point:** 4.5m

**Fisheries Include:** Small / Largemouth Bass



Limited water quality data is available for Clear Lake. Records indicate that shoreline property owners have not yet formed a Lake Association or participated in the Ministry of Environment's Self-Help Program also known as the Lake Partner Program. Comprehensive testing in 2001 and 2006 through Mississippi Valley Conservation's (MVC) *Watershed Watch Program* provides a comparison between water quality conditions as they exist now, to results obtained 21 years ago through the MOE Recreational Lakes Program.

In general the water quality in Clear Lake is good. There is one sampling station at the deepest point of the lake which was sampled three times in 2006. A map is provided in this report for exact sampling location. Graphs will also follow that show water clarity, as measured by Secchi Disc. The mean for 2006 was 3.3 metres indicating that Clear Lake is a moderately enriched (some nutrients) or a mesotrophic lake.

Directly related to water clarity is the amount of nutrients, in particular phosphorus, entering the lake. The Provincial Water Quality Objective for Total Phosphorus for Clear Lake is 20 micrograms/litre ( $\mu\text{g/L}$ ). The mean for euphotic zone (penetration of light) for 2006 was 11.6

ug/L indicating a moderately enriched (some nutrients) or a mesotrophic lake. The mean for the sample taken one metre off the bottom was 9.6 ug/L, indicating an unenriched (few nutrients) or an oligotrophic lake.

Chlorophyll a is a measure of the algal density in the lake. The average chlorophyll a densities for the sampling station in 2006 was 6.7micrograms/litre indicating a high algal density for Clear Lake.

It is not all good news, plants and animals are a direct reflection of their environment. The most critical time of year for conducting dissolved oxygen and temperature profiles is after August 31. Profiles are generally conducted at this time of year and at the deepest point in the lake. Aquatic vegetation and algae that has grown over the summer, has died off and settled on the bottom, using the available oxygen necessary to sustain aquatic life in the lower portion of the lake or the hypolimnion.

The dissolved oxygen and temperature data, measured at the deepest point in the main basin, indicate by late summer warm water fish species, such as bass, are able to inhabit all four metres of the lake. However, with Clear Lake's shallow depth, residents and users cannot afford to be complacent. Every effort should be made to reduce nutrient loading into the lake from land use activities.

Clear Lake was also tested for invasive species in 2006, in particular, for zebra mussels and spiny water flea, in partnership with the Ontario Federation of Anglers and Hunters. Clear Lake did not have spiny water flea present but zebra mussel veligers (larvae) were detected in the samples collected. Residents and property owners need to ensure that all access points to the lake have posted signs indicating the presence of zebra mussels and the precautions they can take to avoid the spread of invasive species to other lakes.

Residents and users of Clear Lake need to adopt a stewardship approach to limit the amount of nutrients entering the lake. A first step to achieve this is to form a Lake Association. It is recommended that a Lake Steward be appointed to undertake ongoing water quality testing and to join the Mississippi Valley Lake Stewardship. Network Monitoring over time is essential to determine long term trends and changes. Resources and information are readily available through the *Watershed Watch Program*. We all have a responsibility to preserve this precious natural resource for future generations



# How Does Clear Lake Measure Up?

## 1980 – 2006 WATER QUALITY RESULTS – MAIN BASIN

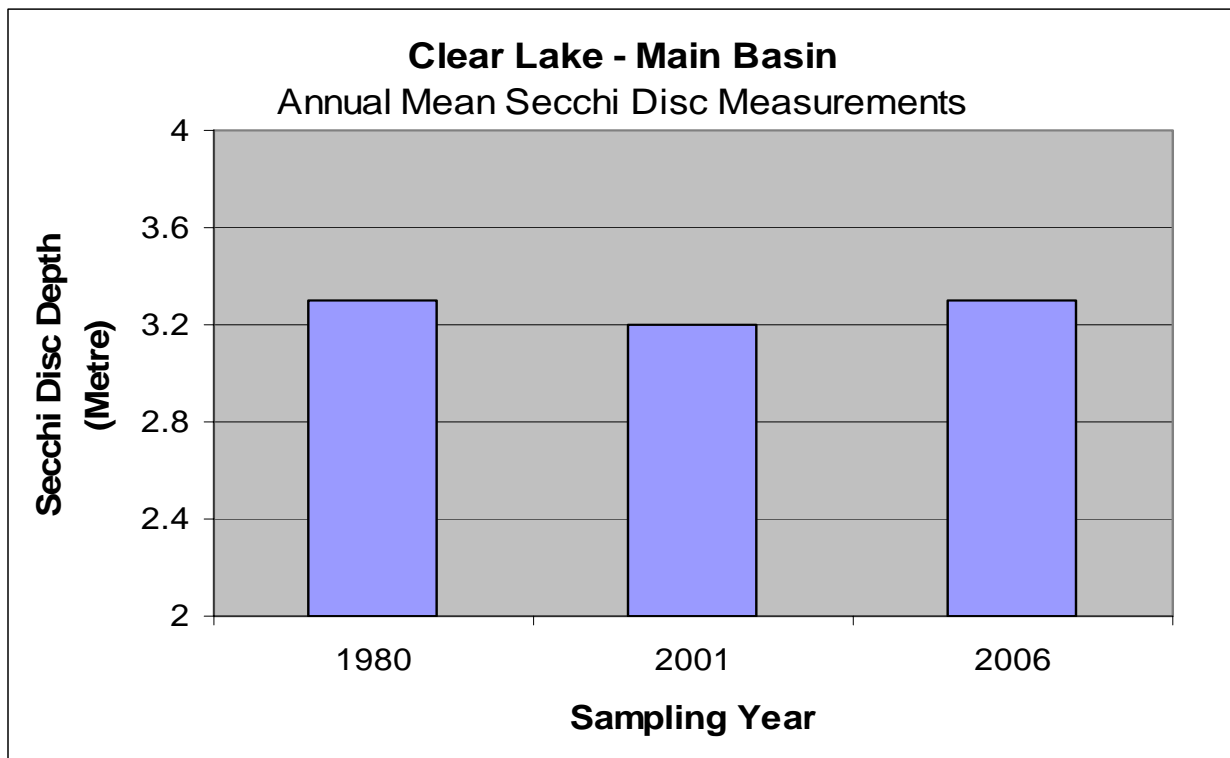
Sample Year Mean	Secchi Disc Depth (Metres)	Total Phosphorus Euphotic Zone (Micrograms/litre)	Total Phosphorus 1 Metre off Bottom (Micrograms/litre)	Chlorophyll <u>a</u> Composite (Micrograms/litre)
**1980	3.3	12.8	12.0	3.35
2001	3.2	13.8	14.5	4.21
*2006	3.3	11.6	9.6	6.7
N	3	3	3	3
Mean	3.2	12.7	12.0	4.75
Standard Deviation	0.06	1.10	2.45	1.74

\*Mean based on less than 6 measurements    \*\*Includes Recreational Lakes Program Data  
 Chlorophyll a data prior to 1985 has been adjusted to reflect new lab procedures in filtering resulting in an increase in chl.a concentrations by 35%

**The higher the Secchi Disc measurement the clearer your lake is!**

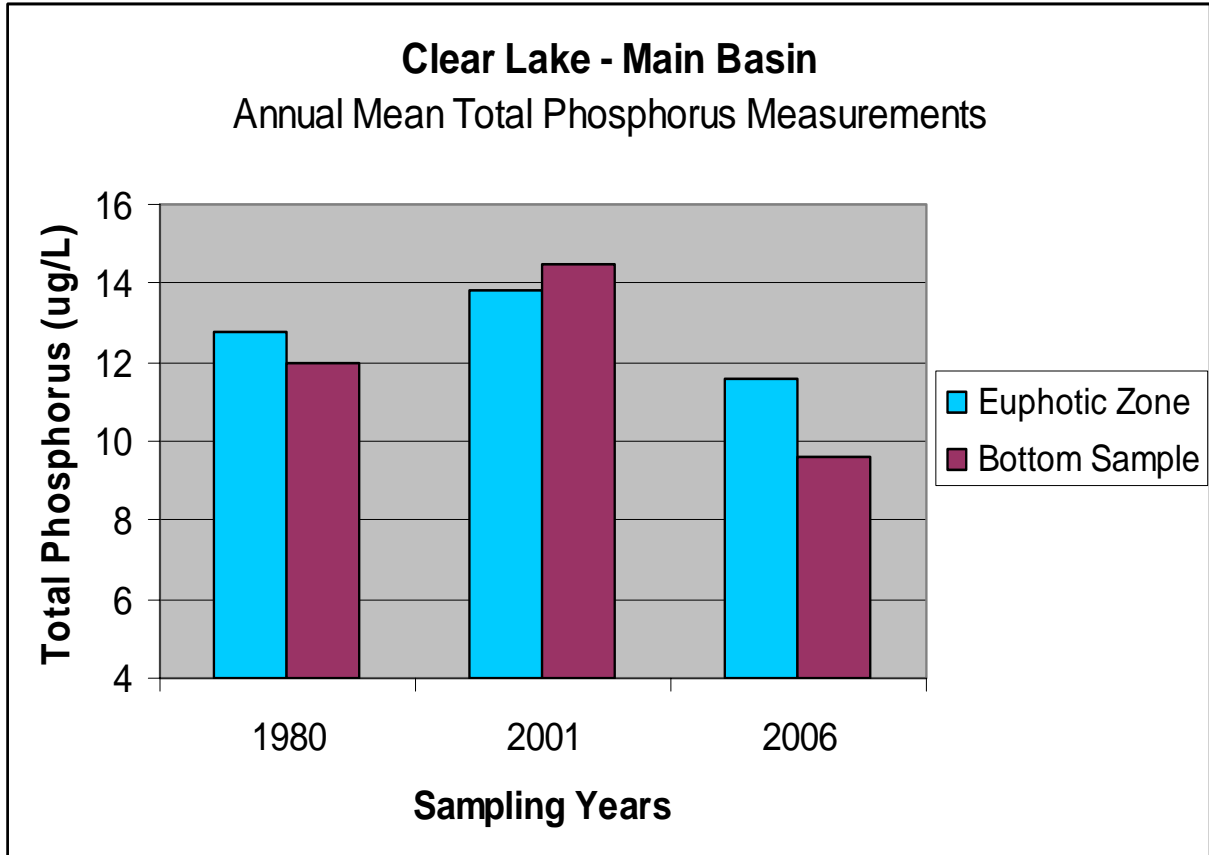
### INTERPRETING YOUR SECCHI DISC RESULTS

Secchi Reading	Lake Nutrient Status
Over 5 metres	Oligotrophic - unenriched, few nutrients
3.0 to 4.9 metres	Mesotrophic – moderately enriched, some nutrients
Less than 2.9 metres	Eutrophic – enriched, higher levels of nutrients



The lower the phosphorus reading, the clearer your lake is!

Nutrient Loading and How to Interpret the Water Quality Result :	
If the Total Phosphorus Reading is...	Your Lake is...
10 ug/L or less	Oligotrophic - unenriched, few nutrients
11 to 20 ug/L	Mesotrophic – moderately enriched, some nutrients
21 ug/L or more	Eutrophic – enriched, higher levels of nutrients

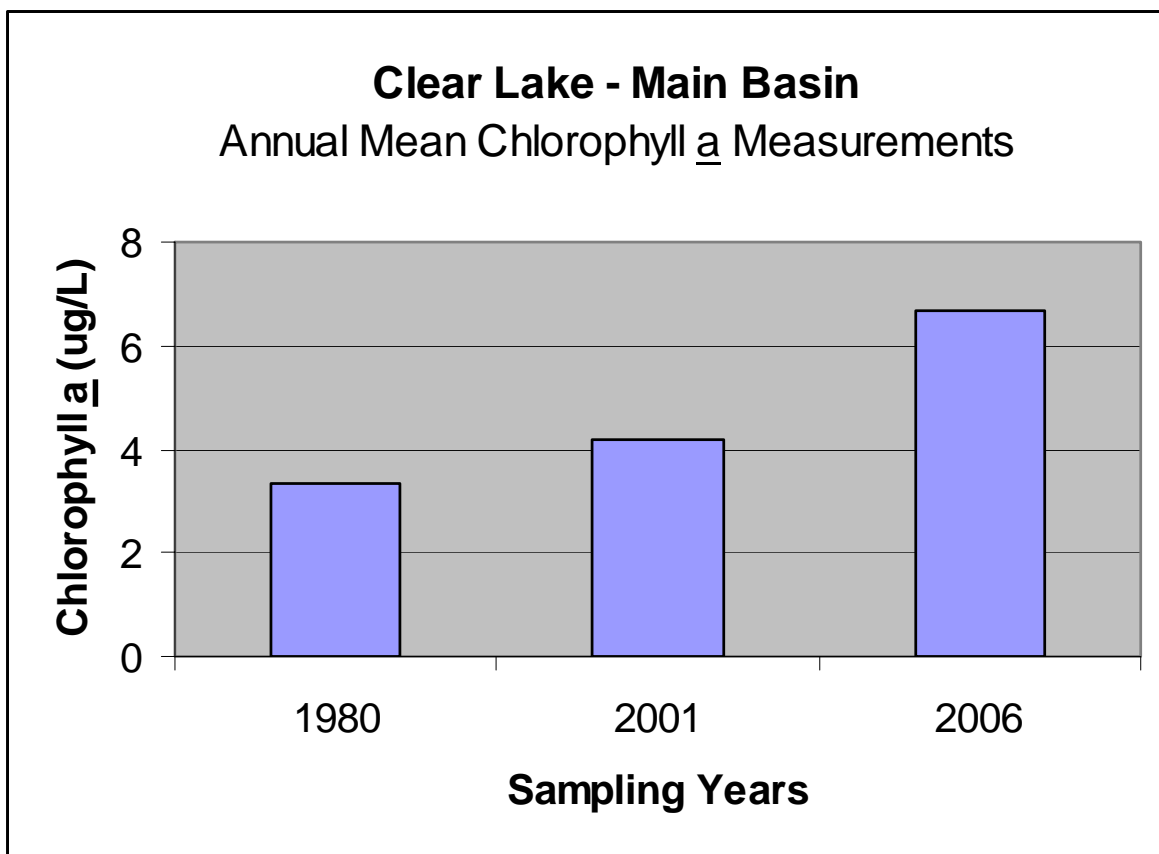


### **FIVE EASY STEPS TO IMPROVE WATER QUALITY**

1. Build at least 30 metres away from the shoreline.
2. Keep your lot well treed and preserve or replant native vegetation along the shoreline.
3. Pump out your septic tank every three to five years.
4. Reduce water use and use phosphate free soaps and detergents.
5. Keep the size of your lawn to a minimum; do not use fertilizers, herbicides or pesticides.

The lower the Chlorophyll a density, the clearer your lake is!

Nutrient Loading and How to Interpret the Water Quality Result :	
If the Chlorophyll <u>a</u> density is...	Your Lake is...
Up to 2 ug/L (low algal density)	Oligotrophic - unenriched, few nutrients
2 – 4 ug/L (moderate algal density)	Mesotrophic – moderately enriched, some nutrients
More than 4 ug/L (high algal density)	Eutrophic – enriched, higher levels of nutrients

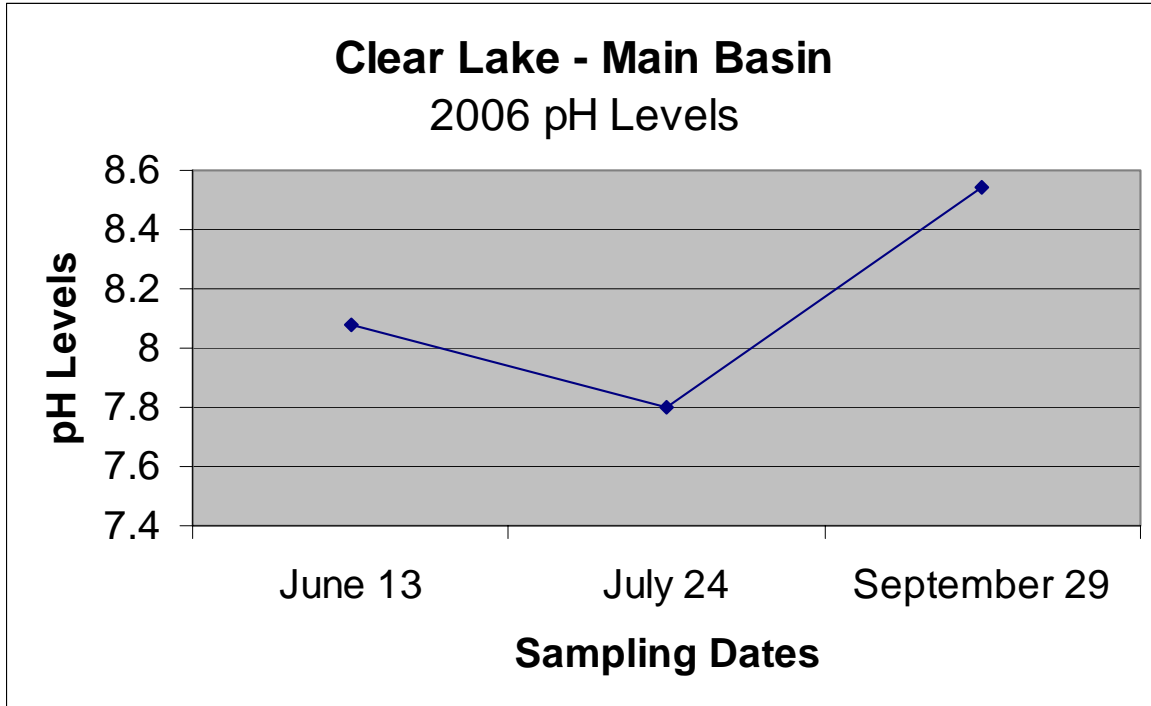


For more information on lakes in the  
Mississippi Valley Watershed, visit MVC  
online at

[www.mvc.on.ca](http://www.mvc.on.ca)



Lakes with pH levels of 7.3 or higher are vulnerable to zebra mussel invasives!



## CLEAR LAKE – MAIN BASIN

### DISSOLVED OXYGEN / TEMPERATURE PROFILE

MOE Rec. Lks. Station # 18-3430-748-01 MVC Station # 06-11

Date: June 13, 2006

Depth: 4.5 Metres

Euphotic Zone (Penetration of Light) = 4.5 Metres

Depth (Metres)	Temperature (Degrees Celsius)	Dissolved Oxygen (Milligrams/Litre)	Percent % Saturation	Thermal Stratification
0.1	19.5	5.0	52	Epilimnion
1.0	18.6	5.3	53	
2.0	17.1	5.5	54	Thermocline
3.0	16.5	5.5	53	
4.0	16.1	4.8	46	Hypolimnion
4.5	Bottom	Bottom	Bottom	

Warm Water Fish Habitat (Bass, Walleye, Pike, Perch) = Dissolved Oxygen greater than 4 mg/L at less than 25 Degrees Celsius

## CLEAR LAKE – MAIN BASIN

### DISSOLVED OXYGEN / TEMPERATURE PROFILE

MOE Rec. Lks. Station # 18-3430-748-01 MVC Station # 06-11

Date: July 24, 2006

Depth: 4.5 Metres

Euphotic Zone (Penetration of Light) = 5.0 Metres

Depth (Metres)	Temperature (Degrees Celsius)	Dissolved Oxygen (Milligrams/Litre)	Percent % Saturation	Thermal Stratification
0.1	25.0	7.0	80	
1.0	24.7	6.5	74	Epilimnion
2.0	24.4	7.3	84	
3.0	22.7	4.3	46	Thermocline
4.0	22.5	1.5	11	Hypolimnion
5.0	Bottom	Bottom	Bottom	

Warm Water Fish Habitat (Bass, Walleye, Pike, Perch) = Dissolved Oxygen greater than 4 mg/L at less than 25 Degrees Celsius

## CLEAR LAKE – MAIN BASIN

### DISSOLVED OXYGEN / TEMPERATURE PROFILE

MOE Rec. Lks. Station # 18-3430-748-01 MVC Station # 06-11

Date: September 29, 2006

Depth: 4.0 Metres

Euphotic Zone (Penetration of Light) = 4.0 Metres

Depth (Metres)	Temperature (Degrees Celsius)	Dissolved Oxygen (Milligrams/Litre)	Percent % Saturation	Thermal Stratification
0.1	15.1	9.0		
1.0	15.1	9.0		
2.0	15.1	9.1		Epilimnion
3.0	15.1	9.1		
4.0	Bottom	Bottom	Bottom	

Warm Water Fish Habitat (Bass, Walleye, Pike, Perch) = Dissolved Oxygen greater than 4 mg/L at less than 25 Degrees Celsius

**How to protect or restore a shoreline depends on the conditions of the site and the energy and resources of the owner.**

**There are four main strategies to choose from:**

1.) **PRESERVATION** – When purchasing lakefront property, a natural shoreline is retained and access to the lake is designed to avoid shoreline damage.

3.) **ENHANCEMENT** – Native species are planted non-native species are removed.



2.) **NATURALIZATION** – Degraded shorelines are left alone to return to their natural state.

4.) **RESTORATION** – Cleared areas are planted with native species.

<b>LOW PHOSPHORUS LIFESTYLE</b>	<b>Amount of Phosphorus (grams)</b>	<b>HIGH PHOSPHORUS LIFESTYLE</b>	<b>Amount of Phosphorus (grams)</b>
Human waste	535	Human waste	535
No dishwasher	0	Dishwasher using powdered detergent once per day	650
No fertilizer	0	Lawn fertilized once/year	1960
Trees not cut down	20	Lot cleared of trees	30
Uses phosphate-free products	20	Uses products with phosphate	180
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>575 grams</b>	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>3355 grams</b>



**Mississippi Valley Conservation**

*The Watershed Watch program was made possible thanks to the generous support of the Ministry of Environment, Lake Associations, area Stewardship Councils, the Lake Stewardship Network and concerned citizens. A special thanks to Rob Harvey for allowing access to the lake through his private property.*

**For more information regarding Watershed Watch or for advice on how you can help protect and enhance your lake environment, contact Susan Lee, Watershed Monitoring Supervisor at Mississippi Valley Conservation. (613) 259-2421 or [slee@mvc.on.ca](mailto:slee@mvc.on.ca)**