

WE ALL LIVE ON THE WATER: THE BEAUTY OF A STORM WATER PROTECTION PLAN

Written by LAURIE BROCCOLO | Photography courtesy of BROCCOLO TREE & LAWN CARE, INC.



In our corner of New York we are fortunate to have abundant waterfronts. Lakefront edges, private ponds, small creeks – none of these exist in isolation. This is why building or modifying a waterfront property comes with tremendous responsibility. Erosion control, shoreline protection, and stormwater run-off are critical issues when it comes to water pollution prevention and protecting water quality and property values.

Today, what you don't know about stormwater pollution prevention can cause problems. The Department of Conservation (DEC) has changed their standards. Unfortunately, many people still carry a common misperception; to protect the shoreline, just add rocks. With only rocks, storm surge water undermines the soil, thus eroding the land, choking aquatic life, and carrying pollutants. The newer DEC standards are more effective and encourage a more aesthetically pleasing waterfront edge on your property.

If you have waterfront property, whether it's a private pond, lake, or even a creek, the DEC wants you to develop what it calls a Stormwater Pollution Prevention Plan or SWPPP. Four important areas to consider in an SWPPP are:

- 1. CLIMATE.** Build to accommodate extreme ranges of frequency, intensity, and duration of rainfall or snowmelt.
- 2. TOPOGRAPHY.** Long, steep slopes increase the potential for dramatic erosion so plan accordingly.
- 3. SOILS.** Soil texture, structure, compaction, and composition all influence erosion rates.
- 4. VEGETATIVE COVER.** Proper vegetation greatly reduces soil erosion by absorbing raindrops, slowing the speed of run-off, binding the soil, and increasing filtration.

Vegetation is particularly important because it has such a dramatic influence on both aesthetics and stormwater pollution prevention. Rocks are attractive and effective when paired with coir logs and plants. The goal is not to have a crisp, barren wall as a dam, but rather a more natural environment where plants are growing in between crevices, securing the soil between the rocks and coir logs.

The best plant choices are aggressive natives because they are hardy and sturdy against ice and storm surges, all while requiring minimal soil and maintenance. These are usually species people see as weeds but in reality they are the plants that make valuable contributions to a waterfront property and wildlife. Take swamp milkweed, for example. Swamp milkweed is a shrubby, herbaceous plant great for erosion control and one of only three host plants for monarch butterflies. Red twig dogwood thrives with wet feet. Its branches grow along the ground sending out roots that further stabilize soil.

To get started on your SWPPP, ask a Certified Nursery Professional (CNP) for plant and material suggestions. Look for one who has the proper environmental qualifications and understands SWPPP.

A good CNP will make your landscaping look artful and lovely while being highly functional. To help you, the DEC has published a booklet available on the internet titled, *Developing Your Stormwater Pollution Prevention Plan: A Guide for Construction Sites*. You can find it on <http://cfpub.epa.gov/npdes/stormwater/swppp.cfm>.

Think of these guidelines not as a burden but rather a plan that will protect your investment and enjoyment of your waterfront property for years to come. When it comes to the environment, everyone lives on the water and each seemingly insignificant effort can add up to something wonderful. **DESIGNNY**

