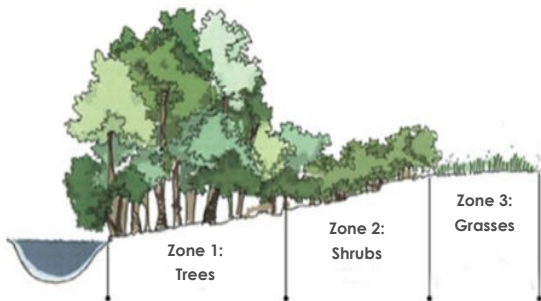


## Streambank and ditch care

Pollution entering streams will eventually reach Owasco Lake and degrade water quality. Tips for protecting water quality in your stream:

- Maintain a vegetated buffer zone along your stream to prevent erosion and filter other pollutants; try to include trees, shrubs, and perennials.
- Avoid placing or discarding soil, leaves, grass clippings, refuse, pet waste, and other materials in or near streams and ditches.
- Limit use of herbicides, pesticides, and fertilizers near streams, ditches, and especially the lakeshore.
- Armor high erosion areas with appropriately-sized stone; since this may require permits and designs, consult the Cayuga County Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD) or Owasco Lake Watershed Inspection and Protection Division (OLWIPD) for guidance.
- Avoid locating temporary or permanent structures within areas that commonly flood during storm events (floodplains); contact SWCD or OLWIPD with questions.

*Streamside (riparian) buffers planted with trees, shrubs, and perennials along your streambanks can slow stormwater runoff, reduce erosion, and help to filter out pollutants.*



## Owasco Lake Watershed Facts

- The Owasco Lake Watershed is 208 square miles in size, with portions in Cayuga, Tompkins, and Onondaga Counties.
- Owasco Lake is almost 11 miles long—the 6th largest of the Finger Lakes—and has 25 miles of shoreline.
- Owasco has the largest lake to watershed ratio (1:20) of the Finger Lakes, which means activities occurring on land can greatly impact the lake's water quality.
- The water in Owasco Lake remains for 2-4 years before being replaced, a relatively short hydraulic retention time compared to other Finger Lakes.
- Owasco Lake's water originates from hundreds of tributary streams throughout the watershed; the four largest tributaries are: the Owasco Inlet, Dutch Hollow Brook, Sucker Brook, and Veness Brook.
- Approximately 45,000 central Cayuga County residents receive their drinking water from Owasco Lake.
- Owasco Lake is a tourist destination for recreational activities including fishing, boating, swimming, hiking, and wildlife viewing.

For more information:

[Owasco Lake Watershed Inspection and Protection Division](#)

(315) 427-5188

(315) 209-9840

[www.owascoinspection.org](http://www.owascoinspection.org)

[Cayuga Soil and Water Conservation District](#)

(315) 252-4171

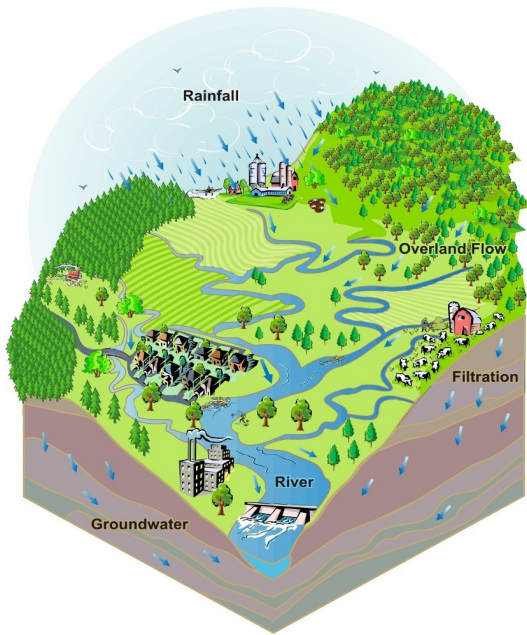
[www.cayugaswcd.org](http://www.cayugaswcd.org)

# Owasco Lake Watershed

## Understanding Stormwater

Where we live, work, and play together.





Source: [http://www.bedfordcountyconservation.com/Watersheds/watersheds\\_page1.htm](http://www.bedfordcountyconservation.com/Watersheds/watersheds_page1.htm)

## What is stormwater runoff?

Stormwater is rain or melted snow that runs along the ground without soaking in, and drains into ditches, streams, and lakes. As stormwater flows over surfaces – including roads, parking lots, yards, fields, and construction sites – the runoff collects pollutants like litter, motor oil, gasoline, fertilizers, pesticides, sediment, and bacteria.

As pollutants from across an entire watershed are carried into waterways, they degrade water quality. Degraded water quality means:

- Treatment and filtration of drinking water can be more expensive.
- Fishing, swimming, and other recreational activities may be restricted.
- Declining habitat for native aquatic species, plants, and animals.

## What can I do?

We're asking Owasco Lake Watershed residents and visitors to commit to protecting water quality.

In this brochure, you will find suggestions for minimizing polluted stormwater runoff generated by lawn, garden, and streambank maintenance activities.

### Lawn and garden care

- Test your soil annually for nutrient and pH levels before adding fertilizers, herbicides, and pesticides; use these products only as needed.
- Use natural fertilizers, which release nutrients slower than synthetic alternatives, and therefore are less likely to be washed away by runoff.
- Use only phosphorus-free fertilizers—it's the law!
- Avoid spreading fertilizers, herbicides, and pesticides if rain is expected.

### Lawns

Keep your lawn lush and green while protecting water quality:

- Avoid mowing your lawn too short; longer grass blades help slow runoff, resist drought, and require less fertilizer.
- Leave grass clippings on the lawn as natural fertilizer, rather than bagging, to reduce the need for additional fertilizer.
- Avoid rinsing mower parts near or into storm drains as rinse water may contain pollutants like gasoline, oil, and detergents.

***It is important to note that water flowing into storm drains is not filtered before entering waterways.***

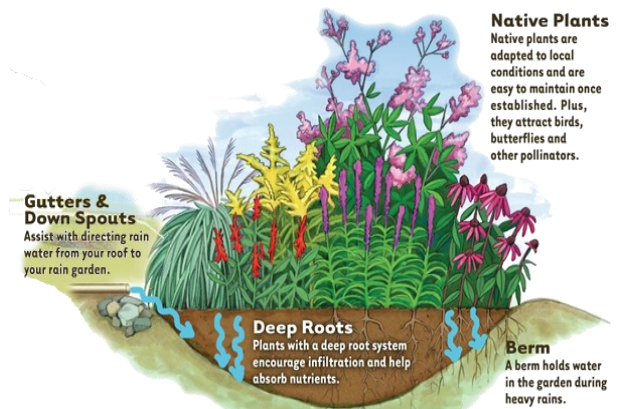
***If everyone makes small changes to their activities, together we can minimize the pollutants entering our waterways!***

### Gardens

Beautify your yard while reducing runoff:

- Plant native plants appropriate for your soil and light conditions to reduce the need for excess watering, fertilization, and pesticide application.
- Replace sections of lawn with planting beds; trees, shrubs, and perennials help to slow and absorb runoff.
- Plant trees—trees have dense leaf canopies that slow falling raindrops and vast root systems which absorb large amounts of water.
- Plant wildflowers, especially in drought-prone areas; wildflowers require very little care and will naturally spread to fill in large areas.
- Consider incorporating rain gardens into new and renovated planting areas.

***Rain gardens include a subsurface basin that temporarily holds stormwater, improving the soil's ability to slowly absorb large volumes, and allowing pollutants to be filtered out.***



Source: <http://www.laurensgardenservice.com/rain-gardens-and-rain-barrels/>