

The Scoop About Pet Poop

For as long as pups and people have been together, dog waste has posed a threat to the human nose and foot. Recent water quality studies are indicating more serious concerns than just dodging droppings on the sidewalk.

The environmental impact of dog waste went unrecognized until the mid 1990's when methods of tracking the origin of bacteria were developed. DNA analysis and identification of resistant forms of bacteria are two methods used. The trail of too much bacteria has led to straight to the pet pooch - and the negligent owner who doesn't clean up after him.

A single gram (an amount about the weight of a paper clip) of dog feces contains an average of 23 million fecal coliform, including E-coli. Dogs also carry viruses, salmonella and giardia and may harbor other interesting passengers such as roundworms.

Material deposited on the ground in proximity to a stream, lake, or storm drain has a high probability of entering that waterway. Doggie doo is no exception. That wouldn't matter so much if dogs were as rare as pet ferrets, but that is not the case. Nationwide, there were 68 million dogs in American households in 2000, at least one dog in four out of every ten households. Nearly half of them were "large" - 40 pounds or more.

Dogs are popular pets locally, too. For example, the City of Geneva counted 1,177 canines in their 1999 dog census; the Town of Dix licensed about 400 dogs and the Town of Montour li-

censed 249 in 2001. None of these dogs flush - their wastes are untreated, on top of the ground and ready to wash away unless their owners pick up the leavings.

Studies in California, Idaho, Florida, Virginia and Australia indicate that bacteria associated with dog droppings constitute from 10% to 30% of the bacterial content of surface waters; putting dogs third or fourth (after human sewage and waterfowl droppings) on the list of contributors to bacteria in contaminated waters.

The solution to the problem of pet waste entering water bodies is fairly simple - the plastic bag consigned to the trash after use. Responsible pet owners clean up after their pets. However, picking up after Fido is not a popular activity. A survey by the Center for Watershed Protection in 1999 found that of the 41% of respondents who rarely or never clean up after their dogs, 44% would refuse to do so even in the face of fines and neighbors' complaints. (Incidentally, the number of men who refused to get caught holding the bag was considerably higher than the number of like-minded women.) Fines in some localities are becoming severe as recognition of the magnitude of the problem grows.

Should shoreline cottage owners on Seneca Lake carry more responsibility to clean up after their dogs than owners at the far reaches of the watershed? Certainly - particularly if they mow their lawn to the water's edge. The nearer a contaminant source is to the lake, the

higher the risk of pollution. A buffer of unmowed, heavy vegetation is a margin of safety against nutrients and contaminants entering the water. A plastic bag placed in the trash bin is better.

Responsible pet owners, plastic bag and pooper scooper as their badge of honor, are valued participants in the effort to preserve and protect the Seneca Lake Watershed.

Article provided by SLPWA staff member, Edith Davey, Onsite Wastewater Management Project Coordinator.



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Invasive Species in Great Lakes Results from 7% of Commercial Navigation by Ocean Going Vessels

Great Lakes United *Habitat Watch* #266 issued on October 25, 2002 reported that just 7% of Great Lakes commercial navigation yields 100% of invasions of invasive species from ocean-going vessels.

The US Army Corps of Engineers Great Lakes Navigation System review provided information on the ratios of Great Lakes domestic, regional and foreign commercial trade.

Currently 93% of the trade on the Great Lakes is domestic and regional. The shipping data outlined the percentages of domestic movement of goods between United States ports (57%), between Cana-

dian ports (12%) or regional movement of goods between U.S. and Canadian ports (24%). This domestic and regional trade does move invasive species around the basin but does not initially introduce invasive species.

Only 7% of commercial shipping in the Great Lakes is from international import or export. This is the percentage of trade that has allowed access to ocean-going vessels carrying invasive species such as zebra and quagga mussels, round goby, Eurasian ruffe, spiny water flea and fishhook flea.

Update on Invasive Snakehead

In early September, biologists treated a small pond in Crofton, Maryland with the toxin rotenone, following the discovery earlier this summer of the northern snakehead, an aggressive, carnivorous non-native Asian species. Within two weeks, the toxin had produced 1,000 dead juveniles and eight dead adult snakeheads. Rotenone stops the flow of oxygen to fish and ultimately suffocates them but is not considered harmful to mammals or amphibians. A neutralizing agent was later applied to the pond to return it to a normal state and state officials plan to stock it with non-invasive species of fish.

EPA Report (cont'd)

dards. State officials decide whether their bodies of water should be usable for fishing, swimming, drinking or a combination of these activities. Then they measure whether water samples are "impaired" for those uses.

Wayland cited a need to engage a lot more people in the effort to protect water quality.

This report, along with related information, is available through the EPA's website at www.epa.gov.

Information obtained from EPA, Great Lakes United and USA Today.

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in Seneca Lake!*



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