



Colchester Clean Water Initiative Summer 2017 Update

Colchester's Clean Water Initiative is a series of capital projects, programs, regulations, and plans aimed at protecting and improving water quality in Colchester's rivers, ponds, streams, and Lake Champlain. Updates on each project can be found below. If you have questions about these projects please contact Karen Adams, Technical Services Manager, at 264-5621 or email kadams@colchestervt.gov.

The Malletts Bay Stormwater Scoping Project: Currently underway with three main project areas being evaluated: intersection improvements at Bayside Park; improved bike and pedestrian amenities along West Lakeshore Drive; and stormwater management along both East and West Lakeshore Drive. Alternatives for each project area will be presented to the Selectboard in October 2017. Improvements could be completed within the next 5 years, subject to funding and voter approval if local funding sources are used.

Lakeshore Re-zoning & Low Impact Development Standards: New zoning regulations standards were adopted in late summer of 2016 and two new zoning districts were created along West Lakeshore Drive. New projects or redevelopment must minimize hard surfaces and keep runoff from reaching the Lake. For more information, contact the Planning Department at 264-5606.

Stormwater Utility: After 18 months of consideration, a utility was adopted by the Selectboard and began operations on July 1st. The Town's stormwater program is no longer funded through property taxes. Instead, there will be a separate billing of stormwater fees in January 2018. The change allows the Town to charge tax-exempt properties for stormwater management which will generate approximately \$140,000 in revenue. The utility funds water quality sampling, construction of drainage improvements, regular system maintenance, permit compliance, and studies to prioritize stormwater projects.

The Malletts Bay Sewer Project: This municipal sewer project is a joint effort by the Town and Colchester Fire District #2 and will improve water quality by eliminating the need for septic systems in the Bay, many of which don't meet state standards. A build out analysis and return on investment evaluation is being done to determine financial viability of this project. Also underway:

- Dialogue with the City of Burlington, regarding wastewater treatment capacity in their wastewater treatment plant, as they complete their integrated permitting study. Results will be available in 18 months.
- Analysis of feasibility of rerouting the Malletts Bay sewer system into the existing system.
- Discussions with CFD#2 District Administrator on their policies and future expansion plans, which will have an impact on the viability of the Sewer Project.
- Research of possible funding sources other than property taxes, including clean water funding sources from the State.

Water Quality Sampling: Conducted by Town staff for the presence of e. coli twice weekly at 9 locations including Bayside Beach and Rossetti Natural Area. If counts are over the Department of Health limit, the

affected beach will have warning signs posted. See <http://colchestervt.gov/487/Water-Quality-Results> for more information.

On-Site Wastewater Program: The Town provides mini-grants to property owners who have failing or failed septic systems in high-risk areas. Staff can also assist property owners to apply for low-interest loans offered by the state (3% for a 15-year loan). Take care of your septic system: know where your septic system and leach field are located and perform regular maintenance: have the tank pumped regularly; do not put oils, chemicals, or solids down the drain; and use as many low-flow appliances as possible. For more information contact the Planning Department at 264-5606.

Rain Barrel Workshops: The Colchester Conservation Commission hosts an annual Rain Barrel Workshop in early spring at Ace Hardware in Colchester. Participants build a rain barrel to collect rainwater that would otherwise go down a storm drain.

Regional Stormwater Outreach: Rethink Runoff (formerly the Chittenden County Stream Team) is a regional group that provides education to residential and commercial property owners about ways to reduce their impacts on stormwater. Colchester staff participates in Rethink Runoff events. On Saturday, September 30, 2017 members and regional artists will gather at Bayside Park for a storm drain stenciling event. The artists will provide eye-catching reminders to residents that catch basins drain directly to our streams and Lake Champlain. Never dump oil, grease, chemicals, or trash into them! Visit www.rethinkrunoff.org for more information.

It's Clean Water Week! (August 20-26)

Governor Phil Scott will issue a proclamation on August 21st that declares August 20-26 Clean Water Week in Vermont. The Town of Colchester is a proud sponsor of this event. We invite you to join us in celebrating Vermont's Waterways and the efforts of businesses, organizations, and communities like ours to protect and restore clean water statewide. Check out <http://dec.vermont.gov/watershed/cwi/clean-water-week> for a full list of events.

What Threatens Water Quality in Vermont?

Phosphorus: Naturally found in soil, but is being washed into the Lake in large amounts via stormwater runoff. Excessive phosphorus can result in rapid-growth algae and cyanobacterial harmful algal blooms (HABs). An HAB can look like foam, scum, mats, or paint floating on the water and can be blue, bright green, brown, or red. HABs produce a variety of toxins that can kill fish and dogs, and sicken humans. When organisms in a bloom die they give off a rotten smell. Algae blooms have a negative economic impact on lakefront property values and on recreational tourism revenues. For more information about Cyanobacteria and harmful algal blooms visit: <https://www.cdc.gov/habs/index.html>.

Bacteria and viruses: Human waste from failing septic systems and waste from pets, wildlife, and farms are carried to the Lake via runoff and can cause illness in people and animals exposed to contaminated water. Additionally, **sand, oils and pesticides** are washed into our waterways with every rain storm.

Invasive Species: Non-native animals and plants are introduced to our waterways either intentionally or accidentally. They may spread quickly, crowd out native species, and disrupt the ecosystems that native species depend on. As of 2014, fifty aquatic invasive species have been identified in Lake Champlain. You can learn more at: <http://www.lcbp.org/water-environment/aquatic-invasive-species/>.