

WATER QUALITY MATTERS

We are on the brink of a new growing season, and as our wetlands swell with water and vernal pools start to stir with life, please think of the water resources that are needed to support these sensitive environments. Streams, rivers, vernal pools, and prime wetlands in our town receive water from non-point source runoff from our homes, which are often in close proximity. Non-point source runoff is any drainage that is discharged over a wide land area, not from one specific location, and is most prevalent in areas that lack sewers. Smart property maintenance practices such as the following can protect the water quality around our houses and in downgradient environments:

- **Reduce fertilizer use** by reducing lawn area and by using slow release or organic fertilizers. Fertilize only when needed by testing the soil pH and nutrient levels. Do not fertilize if heavy rain is predicted as the nutrients will be flushed into lower areas. Do not apply fertilizers within 10 feet of wells, drainage ditches, culverts or roadways or within 25 feet of rivers, streams, or wetlands.
- **Landscape with native plants** that are adapted to this environment and do not require much, if any, fertilization.
- **Maintain healthy buffers to wetlands** by keeping a wide perimeter of lush vegetation to help filter runoff, reduce erosion, and lessen the impacts of flooding.
- **Mow your lawn to 3 inches or higher** to help hold water longer and naturally resist weeds.
- **Plant rain gardens**, an area with water loving plants, to manage storm water runoff from sump pump discharges and downspouts.
- **Minimize erosion** by maintaining lush plant growth on steep slopes.
- **Minimize impervious surface impacts** by planning the smallest building and shed footprints and the shortest driveways as possible.
- **Use permeable materials**, such as permeable concrete or asphalt, for patio and driveway construction.
- **Manage storm water runoff** by sloping surfaces toward vegetated areas.
- **Prevent chemical contamination** by storing oil, gasoline, fertilizer, and pesticides in leak-proof containers away from wetlands, and never pour chemicals or prescription drugs down the sink. Do vehicle maintenance and engine repair over an impervious surface such as a drip pan, concrete floor, or tarp.
- **Maintain your septic system**, by inspecting them annually and pumping them every 3 to 5 years or more frequently as needed. Do not use a garbage disposal unless the system is designed for it.

Respectfully submitted, Nancy Roka, Vice-chair, Conservation Commission