

Ripple Effect # 59

“GOIN’ TO THE LAKE?”

This question becomes a familiar refrain here in the Red River Basin during our summer months. For we are fortunate in the Basin to have a multitude of lakes within easy driving distance, in every direction.

From the center of the Basin, we often think east to Minnesota’s “10,000 lakes,” many of them just outside the edge of the Basin. To the west and south, we have the Red River’s own Lakes Ashtabula and Lake Traverse, together with the natural lake areas near Devils Lake and the North/South Dakota border. And to the north, of course, we find Manitoba’s thousands upon thousands of lakes, together with the premier Lake Winnipeg, 10th largest freshwater lake in the world.

So, for those of us in the Basin who plan a visit or stay at the lakes, there’s no shortage of choices!

But our choices do not end there—they continue during our time at the lake, as we choose how to treat the lake we are visiting. Most bodies of water are fragile—and readily harmed by unthinking human actions or misuse.

Here are a few ways you can help protect and sustain the health of the lake during your time at the beach, cottage or campsite:

- Use phosphate-free soaps and detergents. Phosphates can cause excessive growth of algae and water plants, harming both the lake’s health and its aesthetic appeal and recreational opportunities.
- Never bury garbage or waste near a lake or stream. Harmful pollutants may eventually get into the water. Take your garbage with you or dispose of it in appropriate receptacles.
- Don’t overfill your boat’s fuel tank. Spilled fuel or oil from overfull tanks is toxic to aquatic plants and fish.
- Don’t carry aquatic plants or animals from one water body to another. Inspect your boat before moving it to make sure it’s clean of aquatic plants and animals.
- Empty your bait bucket on land before leaving a water body. Bait found at one river or lake should not be used in another, for every ecosystem is unique.

None of these may seem like a big action. But they can add up to make a BIG difference to the lake—and, in turn, to the quality of our own recreation and well-being.

‘Goin’ to the lake this summer?’ Whatever lake you choose to visit this summer, remember that you have choices about what kind of visitor you will be.

The above suggestions, together with additional ideas for longer-term living on lakes, are found in *Clean Water, For me, For you, Forever: A Hands-on Guide to Keeping Manitoba's Water Clean and Healthy*.

Until the next Ripple Effect,

The Red River Basin Commission (RRBC)

The RRBC is a grassroots organization that is a chartered not-for-profit corporation under the provisions of Manitoba, North Dakota, Minnesota, and South Dakota law. Our offices in Moorhead, MN and Winnipeg, MB can be reached at 218-291-0422 and 204-982-7254, or you can check out our website at www.redriverbasincommission.org.

