



## Hamilton Watershed Stewardship Program

A Program of:



## Hamilton Watershed Stewardship Program



### What is an on-line pond?

On-line ponds are located directly within the creek or stream channel.

If you have an on-line pond, it could be having a negative impact on fish habitat and creek water quality - not only on your property, but also on your upstream and downstream neighbour's property as your pond is connected to the larger creek system.

Contact one of our Watershed Stewardship Technicians to learn about steps you can take to mitigate the negative impacts of your online pond.

There are many reasons why people create ponds on their properties. Ponds can provide recreational opportunities like fishing, swimming, and boating and can create reliable water sources for livestock, irrigation and fire fighting. Ponds can also provide excellent fish and wildlife habitat.

If you have an on-line pond, it could be having a negative impact on fish habitat and creek water quality - not only on your property, but also on your upstream and downstream neighbours' properties, by;

- Disrupting the natural flow of water and sediment, which can disrupt the natural balance in the stream ecosystem, impacting fish and fish habitat both upstream and downstream of the pond,
- Causing changes to the quality of water. Large volumes of standing or slow moving water in the on-line pond can result in low oxygen levels and intolerable environments for some fish species,
- Trapping nutrients and allowing water temperatures to increase, which may cause excessive algae growth (reducing visibility in the pond) and make the creek or pond uninhabitable to sensitive fish species such as trout and salmon. Excessive algae often prevents other native plants from growing in the pond by blocking out light that is critical to their growth, and
- Forming a barrier to fish, preventing them from reaching spawning or nursery habitat, which can lead to population fragmentation.

Because of the negative environmental effects mentioned above, the construction of on-line ponds is rarely approved by the Ministry of Natural Resources or Conservation Authorities.

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### I Have an On-line Pond! What Can I Do?

Environmental agencies recommend that on-line ponds be taken off-line. On-line ponds can be retrofitted to become off-line ponds, which have less impact on the aquatic environment. Contact your local Conservation Authority or Ministry of Natural Resources office to discuss taking your pond off-line and to learn about what permits and approvals may be needed and if you are eligible for financial assistance.

**Here are some easy and inexpensive enhancements you can make to help your on-line pond become a healthier and more productive part of your property and the local environment.**



*Photo: Sawmill Pond in Dundas Valley Conservation Area*

Plant native trees and shrubs and allow the vegetation to naturally grow up around the pond and adjacent to the creek's banks. This will help to shade the surface water from the sun's warming rays and keep water temperatures cool, which is important for many fish species that are highly sensitive to fluctuating or warmer temperatures.



*Photo: Spotted Joe-Pye Weed*

Pond-side vegetation can also help stabilize the banks. This can be beneficial not only to the environment but also a cost savings measure to you due to the costs associated with bank repairs. Pond-side vegetation will also provide habitat for birds and other animals while providing overhanging cover and protection for fish species. Pond-side trees and shrubs that you plant will filter, store and breakdown nutrients and sediment carried in surface run-off water before it enters the pond.

The introduction of items such as woody stumps and logs into your pond and along its edge can add habitat and offer protection for fish spawning and rearing areas. Emergent and submergent aquatic plants in and around your pond will also help add diversity while providing fish habitat.

**If you would like more information about enhancing wildlife habitat on your pond, or if you are considering taking your pond off-line, please contact us.**



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Stewardship Program**

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**Interested in learning  
more about natural  
features on your property?  
Call us to arrange a free  
on-site consultation!**