Lake*A*Syst

HOMEOWNER'S GUIDE TO PROTECTING BIG PAYETTE LAKE

FACTSHEET 4: LANDSCAPE PRACTICES AND NEW CONSTRUCTION

If you have the joy of living or recreating in the Big Payette Lake watershed you also have a special opportunity and responsibility to prevent pollutants from entering streams, groundwater and the lake. Payette Lake is the sole drinking water source for the city of McCall as well as for many homes around the lake. Currently the water quality is acceptable, but in recent years increasing human activities around the lake have contributed to deteriorating water quality. Recent conditions have alerted us to the urgent need for protecting our lake and preserving its many uses. It's time to take action.

Guidelines for taking action on your own property or as you are enjoying the lake have been created by the Lake Assessment System program (Lake*A*Syst) so that you too can be a steward of our lake. The program asks you to consider potential risks to water quality that could result from your activities. The following factsheet ("Preventing Contamination of Drinking Water") is the first in a five-part set of materials designed to assist property owners and the public in understanding what strategies we can use to protect and preserve water quality in the watershed. The sets cover these topics:

Factsheet 1: Preventing Contamination of Drinking Water	Factsheet 3: Roads and Driveways
Factsheet 2: Lawn and Garden	**Factsheet 4: Landscape & Construction**
	Factsheet 5: Stormwater Runoff

After you read the factsheet, you can digitally access a Homeowner Risk Assessment Sheet as well as an Action Checklist. These resources will help you identify any potential environmental risks related to Payette Lake and your drinking water, and guide you in taking appropriate action. You will find these resources and more at the Big Payette Lake Water Quality Council website: www.bigpayettelake.org and at the City of McCall's website: www.mccall.id.us

FOR ADDITIONAL INFORMATION:
Valley Soil and Water Conservation District, P.O. Box 580, Cascade 83611; (208)-382-3317
Central District Health Department, 703 N. 1st Street, McCall, 83638; (208)-634-7194
www.cdhd.idaho.gov.

Sponsored by: Big Payette Lake Water Quality Council, the Idaho Department of Environmental Quality, and the Idaho Association of Soil Conservation Districts

LANDSCAPE PRACTICES AND NEW CONSTRUCTION

The Importance of Planning Ahead for Your Site

If you are planning new construction or landscaping on your property it is essential that you consider the effects your activity will have on the lake and watershed. Careful preliminary planning for your site can preserve natural vegetation, minimize disturbance and reduce runoff and erosion.

Soil erosion can undermine structures on your property, reduce your soil fertility, as well as clog road ditches. In addition, soil eroding into Payette Lake and local streams can cause excessive sedimentation, kill aquatic organisms and disrupt spawning habitat. The nutrient-laden sediment can also lead to algae blooms.

All these potential problems are harmful to the environment and to drinking water sources. Your thoughtful land use practices can prevent harmful pollutants from being washed into the lake. Careful planning is crucial as the soil around the lake is highly erodible and many slopes are steep. Making decisions *prior* to construction or landscaping is much more effective than trying to correct problems later. Planning ahead can avoid difficult and costly erosion problems.

STRATEGIES FOR RESPONSIBLE LANDSCAPING AND NEW CONSTRUCTION

The following actions can be taken to reduce your impact on the environment. Planning for these actions should be done prior to construction or landscaping.

Reducing water and runoff problems

TAKE ACTION

- Verify that your contractors are qualified and certified for activities in the Shoreline and River Environs Zone as required by local code.
- Time your construction work for dry periods (summer or early fall) when there will be low runoff and less erosion.
- Locate driveways, walks and edges of your yard and gardens to follow level contours and gentle slopes.
- Minimize impermeable surfaces such as roads, driveways, roofs and parking lots.
- Temporarily stabilize bare soil by using mulches of straw, hay, wood chips or wood fibers.
- Since long steep slopes have the greatest erosion potential, do not allow stormwater runoff to flow directly downhill. Cross-slope designs are always better than up-and-downhill designs.

- Consider putting small dams at intervals to slow runoff and trap sediment.
- Rainfall and snowmelt runoff should be directed to vegetated drainage areas.
- Protect natural drainage areas from filling with sediment by redirecting runoff.
- During new construction, use standardized sediment barriers, temporary berms of straw bales, earth dikes, or sandbags to control erosion.

Preserving existing native vegetation

Plants and trees help hold the soil and prevent erosion, especially on steep slopes. Any time existing vegetation is removed, the bare soil that is exposed can be washed into the lake.

TAKE ACTION

- Maintain a filter strip of natural vegetation along the shoreline of Payette Lake and its tributaries. The best buffer consists of mature woodland, undisturbed grass, and shrubs. This buffer strip is most effective at 50 - 100 feet wide.
- Minimize disturbance to plants and trees, identifying and clearly marking trees that need to be preserved.
- Protect trees from heavy equipment by installing a barrier fence at the dripline. (The dripline marks the edge of a tree's foliage where moisture from rainfall would drop.) Most of the tree's roots lie within the dripline and are vulnerable to damage from heavy equipment that can compact the soil.

Care during and after landscaping and new construction

TAKE ACTION

- Keep the site covered with organic mulch after any disturbance.
- Use hay or straw as mulch to cover disturbed areas after re-seeding.
- Establish a permanent vegetative cover by planting native trees and shrubs whenever possible. Native plants are well-adapted to the local climate and need minimal maintenance and watering. They buffer harsh winter winds as well as provide privacy and wildlife habitat.
- Minimize the use of pesticides and fertilizers and follow label directions carefully.

Use fire-wise landscaping to decrease runoff risk and protect your home from wildfire

TAKE ACTION

- Prune all trees up to 6-10 feet from the ground.

- Remove leaf litter. Dispose of cuttings and debris responsibly (don’t burn or dump into surface waters or ditches.)
- Store firewood away from the house.
- Use fire-resistant building materials.
- Remove hanging branches that are in contact with your house and out-buildings.