



FOR MORE INFORMATION:

University of Idaho Extension  
Extension Educator  
Mike Bauer                      263-8511

July 1, 2009

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

## WATER QUALITY: WE CAN HELP

Ann Warwick, UI Extension Master Gardener, Bonner County

Lake Pend Oreille and its myriad tributaries are the most important resource of Bonner County. We drink the water, admire the beauty, and rejoice in the recreational opportunities our waterways afford us. Waterfront property is considered premium real estate, and is often more heavily populated than other rural areas because of this appeal. However, lands adjacent to waterways are perhaps the most vulnerable to human impact, as what we do near water can have a great affect on water quality.

We can do much to lessen our impact upon water quality when we develop or use land near lakes or streams. Here are a few ideas:

Prevent erosion. Erosion of soil brings runoff to waterways, which can bring sediments to the water, destroy fish habitat, and increase contaminants downstream. Avoid areas of bare soil, and try to keep non porous surface areas such as pavement or structures away from waterways.

Maintain a natural area as a barrier between human living areas and open waterways. Using native plants, trees, and ground covers provides an effective filtering system between human activity and the water. Avoid planting a lawn close to the water's edge. While it is appealing to walk on grass to the shoreline, a lawn can create problems for water quality. Fertilizers wash into the water, stimulating undesirable aquatic plant growth and raising the phosphorus and nitrogen levels of the water. Pesticides can seep into the ground near the shore and eventually find their way to the water, with resulting pollution. Lawn clippings and garden debris decompose in the water, resulting in increased algae growth from nitrogen release.

Keep livestock away from waterways. Livestock activity near streams and lakes contaminates in several ways. Animal fecal matter is an obvious pollutant. Animals foraging on the edges of waterways denudes the ground, creating more probability of erosion, and hoofs moving along the

[Type text]

shore disturb the soil, making it more likely to erode when rain occurs. Fence animals out of areas adjacent to streams, and encourage native plants, shrubs and trees to grow along the banks.

The Lake\*A\*Syst program, from the Bonner Soil and Water Conservation District, has a website with more information: [www.lakeasyst.idahoag.us](http://www.lakeasyst.idahoag.us).

*Ann Warwick has been a University of Idaho Master Gardener in Bonner County since 1996.*

*University of Idaho, U.S. Department of Agriculture and Idaho counties cooperating.  
Cooperative Extension programs are available to all without discrimination.*